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THE GRANDFATHER.

A NOVEL.



BY THE LATE MISS ELLEN PICKERING.

AUTHOR OF

"Nan Darrell," "The Fright," "The Grumbler," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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P R E F A C E .

It seems natural, at the conclusion of our somewhat melancholy task, to say a few words of one who has for several years continued to delight the public with a rapid succession of Novels, which were peculiarly distinguished for a feminine gracefulness of style, merging alternately from the playful to the pathetic ; and pleasing from their very truthfulness and simplicity. While the evident improvement evinced by each succeeding Work, makes us the more regret that her career should have been so suddenly and briefly closed.

Out of her own home circle, (woman's world,) and we would not invade its sanctity even if we could, Miss Ellen Pickering is only known through her writings. And yet we think that many who have wept over "The Fright," and who could help it? sympathised with the annoyances of "The Quiet Husband,"—or rejoiced in the reformation of "The Grumbler," whom we love from the very first, with all his faults, will thank us for enabling them to once more hold commune with their favorite Author through the medium of a Work which she lived not entirely to complete.

ELIZABETH YOUATT.

OSNABURGH PLACE,
REGENT'S PARK.

THE GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I.

It was a clear, bright, autumn day, and the sun streamed down the village street, lending a cheerful look to the dullest, and dingiest objects there. Let the cold and prosaical, the sober and reasonable, as they call themselves, say what they will and laugh as they may, there is more in sunshine than light to the eye and warmth to the body; there is light to the mind and warmth to the heart. It is like the

smile of affection, it soothes—it gladdens—it sublimates the spirit, bidding it forget the world and itself, replacing fears, and doubts, and care, with gratitude and hope. He who feels nothing of this, unless crushed for the time by some great and stunning woe, is “of the earth and earthly,” dead to the higher, nobler feelings of our nature. He who looks on the sun merely as the ripener of his fruit or corn, the one to please his palate, the other to fill his pocket, may laugh at the folly of those

‘who sing of a sun-beam and bask in its ray.’

but the folly rests rather with them than with those whom they ridicule, for the heart can feel higher joys than the palate, and wealth is but as dross compared to a happy, grateful spirit.

A small and straggling village was this same Castle Coombe, on which the sun shone down so brightly—small and straggling yet pretty withal; perhaps the prettier from being both. There was no crowding from want of space, no

continuous row of red brick cottages with sash windows and green blinds; but almost every dwelling had a garden before it, some very small, but nearly all gay, and the sweet briar, honeysuckle, and other climbers, flung their clusters over the gable ends, or crept between the latticed windows—now peeping in—now hanging down their heads like timid children in their play.

It was a pretty and secluded spot, for though Castle Coombe could boast of its post-office—its linen-draper—and one or two other shops; and though a coach passed within a mile of its further end, it was neither a place of traffic or resort, it was out of the line of railroads, projected and completed, the nearest good town being many miles off, and the metropolis at a distance which would have placed it beyond the reach of our grandmothers, if not of their grandchildren.

Well and what then? Castle Coombe was Castle Coombe, its inhabitants after the fashion

of the inhabitants of small places, aye and of large ones too, considered their native place to be one of the wonders of the world, or something very like it. Had not they besides all the perfections of their men, women, and children, cows, horses, and donkeys, and where could any of these be matched? the Castle standing at the distance of a mile from the village church; *the* Castle, there was always a stress on the article to mark its superiority above all other castles, the residence of the Earl and Countess of Castle Coombe. To be sure the Earl and Countess had been abroad for some time, but as they had spent some months there before their departure, of course they would do the same on their return. Then had not they two inns? The one the Black Horse for the mobility, the other the Castle Coombe Arms for the nobility; the landlady of the latter would scarcely condescend to speak to the landlady of the former. And had there not been a lady—a real lady with a

maid and a little girl staying at the Castle Coombe Arms for more than a week? That the lady whose sojourn at the Castle Coombe Arms had been caused by sudden and dangerous illness retired to a quieter lodging as soon as an amendment in health permitted her removal, was declared by the landlady to be nothing extraordinary, and nothing derogatory to the credit of her hostelry; nay, according to the version of that thrifty housewife this removal was rather an honor than otherwise.

The lady, being ill, desired quiet,—now how could quiet be expected in a frequented inn? Her removal instead of hinting at any deficiency in care or cleanliness or civility as the rival landlady of the Black Horse asserted, was only a proof of the overflowing custom. Such at least, as we said before, was the version of Mrs. Hodgson; but it was whispered among the village gossips that from the day of the removal the questions of the landlady

of the Castle Coombe Arms concerning her late guest were tinged with a sharpness unknown before, from whence it was inferred that in spite of her seeming indifference she was inwardly vexed at their change of lodging.

And who was this lady who furnished a subject of question and comment to the good people of the village? She was a widow of the name of Fitzallan, going with her little girl into ——shire for the purpose of seeing a relative, whose pleasure at the meeting appeared to be a matter of doubt and anxiety. Such was the sum and substance of the information obtained from the lady's maid, who readily told all she knew, and her knowing so little was not to be attributed to a want of acuteness, or curiosity, but merely to the short time of her service with Mrs. Fitzallan, who had hired her scarcely a month before to attend her on her journey, her former attendant being suddenly called away by the illness of her

mother. Mrs. Fitzallan though simple mannered and gentle, was not the person to make a confidant of a domestic, especially one newly hired; and though generally civil and attentive there was something about Betty Harper, her mistress could not exactly tell what, which awakened mistrust instead of inspiring confidence.

The widow was still in her weeds, and the same sun that shone on the village street glanced across the close cap, and pallid face of the invalid, as she sat by the window in an old arm chair supported by cushions, looking out into the little garden below, where several children were at play. A louder and more joyous laugh came up from the youthful group below, and there needed but to follow the pale widow's eye as she leant forward from the open casement, to see she was a mother—and mother to the fairest of the gay young band. It was touching to see how the dull eye lighted up, and the pale, parched lip curled with a loving

smile as she gazed on her child, her only child ! her sole remaining tie on earth.

‘ The graceful lily amid humbler flowers !’ whispered the mother’s love and pride, as she marked the difference between Amy Fitzallan and her young companions, the daughters of a solicitor’s widow, whose curiosity had first tempted her to call on the ‘ sick lady,’ as she was generally called, and now induced her to continue the acquaintance.

There was something strange about Mrs. Fitzallan, something to be fathomed, and she would never rest till she had fathomed it. Who was her father ? who was her mother ? and what had her husband been ? These were points on which Mrs. Bates was still in the dark ; broad hints to the mistress and open questions to the maid having failed to elicit the desired information, much to the vexation of the questioner.

“ Perhaps I could fish it out of the little girl if I could get her all by herself :” thought

Mrs. Bates, who could not endure to be in the dark on any subject of gossip. So her children were sent to ask Amy to go and play with them, and the remains of a stale, half eaten cake taken out of a cupboard to win the strange child's confidence.

"I will go and ask mamma," said Amy, after a short conference with her young companions, leaving them in the garden whilst she entered the house.

The mother's head was turned from the window towards the door, and light as was the young child's tread every footfall was heard by the lonely widow's listening ear.

"I have brought you a rose, dear mamma!" said Amy, closing the door softly behind her, and crossing the room on tiptoe. "It does not smell so sweet as the summer ones, and it is not the same sort they say, but it is very pretty."

"Yes very pretty!" replied the mother, glancing from the china rose to the cheek of

her fair, young child, which showed a bloom as bright, yet delicate. "Where did you find it?" she added, pressing a kiss on Amy's brow.

"The baker's boy gave it me, because it was just like me he said. Everybody is kind to Amy."

"May you ever find it so dear child! and ever think so too. A thankful and contented spirit may be your best nay only earthly good. If the hard heart should not relent who will watch over and protect you?"

Sobs choked the mother's closing words, and sinking back in the easy chair she covered her face with her hands.

"Don't cry dear mamma! don't cry!" said Amy, creeping up into the chair beside her, and kissing off the tears which trickled through her fingers as she flung her arms round her neck. "Don't cry, dear mamma! God will take care of us as he does of the little birds that you told me of yesterday."

"True, true, my child! He will protect

you for your simple trust and for your loving heart, though all beside should cast you off. Shame on me for distrusting Him. You have not left a father's home—no parent's curse is on your head. No, no—I bless you—you will be blessed. God will protect the helpless orphan !”

The arms of the mother were wound round her child, and a passionate kiss impressed on her upturned brow. There was a silence of some moments, the child nestling closer and closer to her mother's side, whilst that mother pressed her more warmly to her heart.

“ I would not damp your youthful spirits,” said Mrs. Fitzallan, kissing her daughter's cheek, and then putting her gently away. “ It is selfish to let any sorrow cloud your joy. Go away and play with your young companions again.”

“ Do not send me away—let me stay with you dear mamma !” replied Amy, raising her eyes filled with tears to her mother's face.

Who could resist that loving, pleading look ? Again was she pressed to her mother's heart, and for the hundredth time that mother felt her pangs repaid.

" I will not send you away Amy, against your will ; but a sick chamber is no fitting place for one so young. Go and play for awhile in that bright sunshine. Your young companions are calling you."

" They want me to go back with them ; but I would rather stay with you my own dear mamma ! You do not seem strong to-day, and want me to nurse you."

" No, dear child, you shall not stay with me. I shall be happier knowing you at play with those of your own age ; and Mrs. Bates has been very kind, sending me fruit, and may feel hurt if you do not go. I will try and sleep the while."

" Let me place the pillows for you then, dear mamma !" and taught by a loving heart, the young child placed them as gently and

handily as the most skilful and experienced nurse could have done.

“There now, dear mamma, sleep very nicely ; I shall be back soon.”

The mother looked again into those large brown eyes so soft—so loving, yet so bright—parted the clustering hair from her high white brow, kissed her ruby lips, and either cheek, and then forcing a smile, dismissed her.

The child made no further opposition, but lingered awhile to adjust a foot-stool, and then walked slowly towards the door. She opened it softly, then turned to take a last look of the invalid. The next moment she was again in her mother's arms, hurried back by some strange and sudden impulse, for which she could not account.

“Do let me stay with you, dear mamma !” exclaimed Amy passionately.

“No, no, my child ! better for both you should go,” replied the mother returning her fond caresses. “I need perfect rest for a time.

Go love, go, and do not hurry back—I shall not miss you whilst sleeping.”

Reared in obedience as well as love, the docile child obeyed and departed.

Again did the mother's eye watch her retreating form across the room—across the little garden below, and again did her eager ear catch the light fairy footfall of her child.

Amy looked up as she closed the garden wicket, and catching a sight of her mother's pale face at the window, kissed her hand with a loving, graceful motion. The mother's smile grew bright as she caught the affectionate movement, and there was a little pride in her heart as she marked the grace and beauty of her child. Then that pride was rebuked by the thought that this very beauty might prove her bane and bring woe on her as it had brought it on her mother before her. She watched her till distance hid her from her view, and a sigh told the moment of her disappearance.

She turned from the window and looked

round her small and scantily furnished room, thinking that it looked smaller and more scantily furnished than ever, for Amy, with her bright, loving smile, was not there, and the chamber seemed cold and dull, save where the sunshine glanced in at the window shedding a line of golden light across the floor.

Caught by this glancing of light, her eye followed it out into the street, and even the widow's saddened spirit grew more joyous as she looked upon the gladsome sunshine. If her lodging was small and scantily furnished, still it was quiet and clean compared to the Castle Coombe Arms, and if Mrs Hopkins her landlady did look somewhat sour, she had nevertheless been hitherto civil and obliging, and she was thankful to have this poor lodging, the only one in the village, unable as she felt to continue her journey.

Frost had come early, and the poor dahlias in the garden looked black and withered, the autumn air too was cold and rustled mourn-

fully among the dried up leaves, scattering many as each breeze swept by, yet still the village street cheerful in the sunshine, and the distant woods through which peered a turret of the castle, looked hopeful and bright, glowing with rich and varied tints. So at least thought Mrs. Fitztallan, for the sunshine was gladdening her as it gladdened others, and she who had awakened anxious and fearful was now beginning to hope.

If she did not bask in the sun like the baker's dog in the street, she could smile at the fulness of his enjoyment, and feel in sympathy not in contrast with the cheerful scene beneath her windows. Her recent depressing languor was half forgotten, and she thought not of the time she had been looking from the window, until the sound of the church clock warned her that it was the hour to take her medicine.

She rang the little bell that lay beside her, but no one came; she rang it again—and again—still no one obeyed the summons. She

called, but there was no answer. She tottered to the door and called again;—still no reply—And yet she was pretty sure she heard persons talking beneath the windows at the back of the house. Creeping into her little bedroom which faced that way, she looked out into the lane below. The voices were growing fainter, for the speakers were retreating; but she could see that these speakers were her own maid Betty Harper, and Sergeant Evans stationed in the village on the recruiting service, between whom she had before suspected a flirtation, if nothing more was going on.

There was no such great crime in a serving-maiden flirting with a dashing sergeant had she done it openly, and at a more convenient time; but her evident wish of concealment, and the hurried glance she cast up at the window as she returned to the house to learn if her meeting with her military beau had been observed, awakened in Mrs. Fitzallan doubt and suspicion. Her meeting the sergeant at the

back of the house instead of the front might be only to avoid the comments of prying gossips, and heaven knows there were plenty such in the village of Castle Coombe, as there are, for the matter of that, in most country places. Nay it might have been accidental, but there was that in her look and manner as she glanced up at the window, which made her mistress more anxious than the occasion seemed to warrant.

Creeping back with difficulty, for walking it could scarcely be called, to her easy chair, Mrs. Fitzallan sank down exhausted, wearied by her exertion slight as it had been.

"It is long past the time for taking my medicine, and I have rang for you several times," said Mrs. Fitzallan gently, as Betty at length obeyed her summons.

"One can't do two things at once. I was gone down to the butcher's about dinner for Miss Amy," was Betty's brusque reply as she

founced into the other room to fetch the medicine.

"I shall not be long here, pay heed to the dying," said Mrs. Fitzallan mildly. "Hope not to hide a fault by committing the sin of an untruth for which you will be called to an account hereafter. I chide you not as a mistress, but entreat you as a friend to look to your ways lest you fall!"

"It was not an untruth," replied Betty sharply, yet turning away from her gentle reprover. "You told me to go to the butcher's and so—"

"Stop Betty!" said Mrs. Fitzallan more sternly, "heap not falsehood upon falsehood lest a heavy punishment fall on your head. You have not been on my errand but talking in secret with Sergeant Evans."

"Well what if I did talk a minute to Sergeant Evans, was there anything strange in that when we was a week together at the Castle Coombe Arms?" exclaimed Betty reddening. "We

did not say no harm," she added tossing her head.

"I hope not Betty, but it behoves young women to be careful, and Sergeant Evans you told me yourself had brought comment and blame on more than one. Were it known that you had met him secretly—"

"I am not going to stay here to be spied at and scolded in this way!" exclaimed Betty angrily, her sharp tones drowning the soft, mild voice of Mrs. Fitzallan. "If you don't like my doings pay me my wages and let me be off."

Astounded by this unlooked for impertinence, Mrs. Fitzallan was silent for some moments, and then answered meekly. "Leave me now, I am too weak to say more at present, to-morrow we will talk on the subject of your going if you wish it. Believe me I spoke for your good."

"For my good indeed. By all accounts some people had better look at home before

they find fault with their neighbours," replied the angry Betty with increasing wrath, slamming the door as she quitted the room.

"True, true," murmured the invalid, sinking back again in her easy chair, "it is not for me to reprove another. Had I not disobeyed a father's command I should not be now broken-hearted, and deserted. May her cruel taunt be pardoned, she knows not how deeply it wounds. If he would but answer my letter," she added clasping her thin hands as though in passionate entreaty. "I did but ask permission to crawl to his feet and die, leaving my child in his care. If he would but take off the curse which he laid on my young head when I knelt before him—if he would but say that one word—forgive. He must—he will—he cannot refuse the prayer of his dying child! And yet if he had loved me as other fathers love their children, I think I should have never left him. Had he smiled not frowned upon me I had still—" she paused, then added hur-

riedly, "but no the sin was mine, let the blame and the punishment rest with me only. I trusted a flatterer's words, I relied on his vows, and scorn and desertion were all my reward. There, where the sin was, thence came the punishment. But my child—my innocent child, it is hard she should suffer too. Must she too pine in misery and die perhaps in want!"

She looked from the window to see if her child was returning: no Amy was there, but the village postman coming up the street, and her heart beat quickly at the sight. Would he bring her the long looked for letter? Would her father deign no reply? Or was he even now on his way to see her, and thence his silence? She had written when first taken ill and had as yet received no answer. How anxiously she watched the postman's progress, how long and needlessly he seemed to loiter, now stopping to laugh with one, and now to talk with another. She saw him turn towards

the wicket that opened into the street— she saw him enter the garden, letter in hand—she heard a parley between him and Betty, and then the latter ascending the stairs to her room. How wildly throbbed her temples— how tumultuously beat her heart! Would her father forgive her? Would he love and protect her child?

“ Tenpence ma’am,” said Betty entering the room abruptly, for the penny postage was not then established.

“ Take it,” replied Mrs. Fitzallan giving the purse to the maid, and thinking only at the moment of the letter she held in her hand.

“ And my own wages too,” muttered Betty as she quitted the room, purse in hand, without waiting for further orders.

“ My father’s writing,” murmured Mrs. Fitzallan, pressing the letter to her lips.

It was some moments before her trembling fingers could break the seal. The date was London—the contents brief, harsh, and decisive.

There was no word of affection at the commencement, no term of endearment at the conclusion; it began abruptly and ended the same. There was anger in the stern heart of the writer, unsoftened by love or pity. It was harsh and cruel and ran thus—

“Your letter has been forwarded to me here, for the last time I answer a communication from her whom I no longer own as a daughter. The date of that letter is all I have read or shall read, my resolution neither to see or correspond with one who quitted her father’s roof for the protection of a villain is unchanged—unchangeable. If poor and deserted this is but the punishment due to disobedience. Let him who tempted you to sin support and comfort you. I cast you off and disown you now and for ever!”

And this was the letter for which she had watched so long and anxiously. For some moments Mrs. Fitzallan sat silent and motionless, stunned by the blow, the fatal scroll still

grasped in her trembling hands, her eyes still fixed on the cruel words. "I cast you off, and disown you now and for ever!" those broken and passionate words burst forth from the pale, corpse-like lips, speaking the daughter's and the mother's agony.

"Unkind and cruel to the last. But for his harshness I had never fled, and now he leaves me in my misery to die unpitied, unforgiven. True, true, I have been sorely punished for my sin! May heaven pardon me though he will not. Could I but die within his arms or at his feet so I could only feel that he forgave me!" She paused with clasping hands, then spoke again in wilder grief. "My child! who will take care of thee when I am gone? I have no earthly friend to whom I can commit thee, and must I leave thee lonely desolate to die of want, or starve on the cold bounty of strangers. No, I will make one effort more—brave all his anger, place you within his arms—and die! You have not disobeyed his will; for pride, if not

from love, he will protect his daughter's child, though he will not forgive her mother. It must be done at once—my strength is ebbing fast !”

She started up determined to give orders for an immediate journey to town, but the shock had been too much for her feeble frame, the feet refused to stir, the lips to call, and pressing her hand on her heart with a wild and sudden movement, she sank back again pale and insensible.

CHAPTER II.

AMY was true to her promise of a speedy return, and she sprang up the narrow stair and into the little room with a light and joyous step, and with a heart as light and joyous too, for it had been her mother's care never to damp the young child's cheerful spirit by her own wearing sorrow.

"Dear mamma is asleep," said Amy to herself, closing the door with a noiseless touch,

and creeping across the room to the easy chair. "Mamma looks very white—but she often does of late. I will sit here and wait until she wakes, and then I will tell her how we have been playing—she will like to hear that,"—thought the loving child taking her seat on a stool at her mother's feet, her favourite position, and removing her bonnet that she might the better look into that mother's face. "How very, very white she looks,—and how still she is!" thought the watchful child. A feeling of awe crept over her, checking her breathing and growing in power as the whiteness and stillness continued, till she could scarcely forbear from waking the sleeper to banish the vague and mysterious fear which pressed so heavily upon her young and sensitive heart.

She had sat thus for more than a quarter of an hour,—a quarter of an hour which had seemed treble the time in her childish calculation, when the door was rudely opened by Betty Harper, whose resentment at having

been spoken to concerning the dashing Sergeant still remained.

"Mamma is sleeping," whispered Amy waving her back.

"Sleeping,—she is dead!" exclaimed Betty abruptly, advancing rapidly towards her mistress.

"Dead!" screamed Mrs. Hopkins who was but a step behind; some angry expressions of the wrathful maid having determined the cunning landlady to demand payment for the lodging. "Dead!—a lodger die in my house? Such a thing never happened before. Mercy on us! It will give the rooms an ill name, and prevent their letting, this comes of taking in such people; it is the last time that shall be done."

"Dead!" shrieked the terrified child, springing up and throwing her arms round her mother's neck, and clinging there even whilst she shuddered at the coldness of the cheek against which her own pressed so lovingly.

"She can't be dead, she said she was better this morning," observed the landlady, who was resolved not to have a lodger die in her house if she could help it. "She is only fainting."

"It is a dead faint then that she won't get the better of I fancy. Poor lady! I did not think she was so near her end," replied Betty with a touch of pity. "But there is Doctor Wolley riding down the street, better call him in, for I am sure I don't know what to do; and don't you cling round your mamma's neck so, Miss Amy, she can't get no air."

Doctor Wolley was summoned in all haste, and the arms of the clinging child removed from her mother's neck.

"What has caused this?" asked the doctor whilst busied in applying remedies.

"She has been ailing some time, but I should not wonder if it was this letter which has made her so bad," replied Betty Harper, who had contrived to scan the contents of the paper so firmly grasped in the sick

woman's hand. "There is no getting it away from her. She was going to her father I know, but he won't have nothing to say to her it seems."

"Leave the letter till the fingers uncloze of themselves," said Doctor Wolley. "Where does her father live, he should be summoned without delay?"

"That is more than I can tell, for Missus was very close, and only let out things chance like now and then. I know we were going into ——shire but she never told her father's name, or where he lived exactly, and Miss Amy don't know neither."

"She may recover sufficiently to say where her relatives live, but I doubt it," observed the doctor shaking his head.

"Why should not she, she is not dead—nor going to die," said Mrs. Hopkins, "see, she is opening her eyes."

She did open her eyes, but they closed again on the instant, and a slight movement of the lips with a scarcely preceptible breathing were

the only signs of life for many succeeding hours.

Doctor Wolley, as the villagers called him, though no M. D., after doing all that medical skill could do, left Mrs. Fitzallan to the care of her maid and landlady, being called away to attend another patient whose case was equally urgent. The care of her maid and landlady! little care or attention was she likely to receive from either; the head of the former was filled with thoughts of the Sergeant, the head of the latter with plans for sending her lodger back to die at the "Castle Coombe Arms," or anywhere else, where they would take her in. Each thought too much of her own interests and gratification, to think of the interests of another.

It was long past midnight and the lamp in the chamber of the invalid shed a dim light through the room. There was no sound in that room—no sound in the house—even the village curs seemed all asleep, and the hooting

of a large grey owl as it flew past the window sounded strange and awful amid the stillness. There was no one watching beside the sick woman's bed; landlady and maid had left her some hours before, to follow their own devices, leaving her to the sole care of Amy, and she poor child, despite her fears and grief, had childlike fallen asleep some little time before.

It was not in nature that one so young could keep her lonely watch throughout the night. Refusing to be undressed, she had thrown herself on the bed beside her mother, and there she lay watching that mother's face till the drowsiness that weighed down her eyelids could no longer be withstood.

"Poor lady! she will never be quite sensible again, or if she should wake up in the night there is Miss Amy to get what she wants; she is used to nursing her," said the maid to the yawning landlady. "There is no use in sitting up now, when there may be so much to do to-morrow."

"None in the 'versal world," replied the landlady, nodding assent. "She can't be moved till to-morrow," and so, as we said before, the mother was left to the care of her young child, whose delicate frame was weaker than her love. They had done what the doctor had told them to do—they had said poor lady! and poor thing! what more could be expected from those who, as they expressed themselves, were none of her kith or kin, and might perhaps never be paid for their trouble.

Who could have foreseen that she who was reared in luxury—nurtured in splendour, should be left to die on a lowly bed, untended, deserted and broken hearted? She had left her father full of health and hope; and now, helpless and dying was, in her turn, neglected and deserted.

They who had said that she would never again be quite sensible were mistaken, for when she awoke from the long sleep which had suc-

ceeded her first insensibility, the head was clear though the frame was weak,

"Amy," she said, pressing a kiss on her brow, after watching her slumbers for a time. "I am dying, my child; hear my parting words!"

Faint as was the whisper, poor Amy started from her sleep.

"What do you want dear mamma? what shall I bring you?" she asked only half awake.

"Nothing my child! I need nothing more on earth; only pay heed to what I say. Take this and never part with it let what will come to pass, it was my mother's; had she not died I had not left my father's home."

Taking a locket from her own neck, where it had been worn from childhood, Mrs. Fitzallan placed it round that of her child who received it in silence, awed by the sad solemnity of the speaker's manner. "And take this too," she added, placing the letter received that morning, in her hand, "they will serve to prove your

identity. Go to your grandfather—kneel at his feet—say that with my dying breath I left you to his care. He may forgive me when no more, and love you for my sake, but should he cast you out, I leave you to the care of Him who let little children come unto Him. God will protect my orphan child, I feel no doubt but trust in Him! Amy do you the same amid all trials and all woe. Love Him and do His will and He will not forsake you. I bless Him for the chastening that subdued my stubborn heart and brought me closer to Him—I bless Him for the peaceful trust he gives me now. My child! my child! pray with me now that we may meet in Heaven!”

“ You will go with me to grandpapa ?” said Amy, anxiously clinging around her neck.

“ God does not will it so, and His good will be done!” faltered Mrs. Fitzallan, her voice growing fainter and fainter at every word.

“ Hasten to him when I am gone.”

“ No, no, no, let me stay with you ? I don’t

know his name—I don't know where he lives, and he cannot be kind or good, as he does not love you!" exclaimed poor Amy in passionate grief.

"Hush! Amy hush! grieve me not with your sorrow, but heed my words. His name is—"

The voice sank so low that Amy caught not the name, but guessing from the mention of Harper, that she knew where he dwelt, and would take her to him, she answered accordingly.

"I will do all you wish dear mamma! Indeed—indeed I will!"

"Bless you, my child! kiss me once more ere I die."

"Die!" sobbed the terrified child, clinging more wildly to the mother who pressed her so fondly to her heart. The spirit passed from earth in that passionate caress.

When Doctor Wolley entered the room in

the morning the mother and child were lying side by side clasped in a last embrace—the living cradled on the bosom of the dead—the blooming cheek of infancy pressed closely to the pallid one of middle age.

“My mistress has been sleeping ever since—never spoke or moved; and the child has been sleeping too,” said Betty crossing the room and throwing open the shutters.

“Sleeping—nonsense,” replied the doctor pausing a moment to look at the mother and her child as the morning light streamed across their brows, both so lovely, one in sleep and one in death. “Do you not see your mistress is dead?”

“Ah! poor lady! I thought it would come to that. Well, she is out of her troubles now,” replied Betty Harper with a mingling of levity and pity that would have shocked the good doctor had not his attention been fully occupied with the mournful and touching spectacle before him.

“Move the child gently,” he said, “she must not remain there.”

Just then Amy smiled, gladly, in her sleep, and Mr. Wolley turned away without having the heart to utter another word.

CHAPTER III.

Who shall describe the passionate grief of that poor, desolate child when her young heart fully understood the truth? Dead!—It was a fearful sound even to those of full grown intellect, how much more fearful to a child, whose woe is mingled with an awe, a terror which her young heart feels but cannot tell.

The kind apothecary would have had her removed so gently as not to disturb her sleep,

but the arms of the living and the dead were so closely twined that this was impossible, and when sufficiently awake to know the truth, no entreaties for a time could induce her to move.

"No, no, let me stay with mamma!—let me die with my mamma—dear—dear—dear—mamma!" cried the sobbing girl clinging more wildly to her mother the more strenuous the efforts made to remove her. At length the persuasions of the kind apothecary succeeded, and she consented to leave the room on receiving the promise that she should return again in a couple of hours.

"Mrs. Fitzallan's relations should be informed of her death," said Mr. Wolley addressing Betty Harper.

"I never heard of her having any relations except her father, and he would have nothing to say to her," answered Betty. "She ran away with Mr. Fitzallan, as I understood from what she said one day when she did not quite

know what she was saying, and I suspect he led her a pretty life."

"Mr. Wolley would have written to her father but no one could tell him his name or abode. The post-mark of his letter was London, and to seek there for a man whose very name was unknown, was to seek for a pebble at the bottom of the ocean.

"Missus was always close, better if she had not been," observed Betty Harper.

"Who is to pay for the lodging and the waiting, and the bad character my house will get, having a stranger die in it, I should like to know?" asked the landlady sharply.

"Has Mrs. Fitzallan left no money?"

"Three shillings in her purse and that is all I can find, this comes of taking in sick people out of kindness."

"Mrs. Fitzallan must have friends in a respectable if not an elevated station. I should think the latter to judge by the air and manners of her child," replied Mr. Wolley. "Perhaps

it would be as well to put some advertisements in the papers."

"And who is to pay for them, and for the laying out and the funeral? and who is to pay me I should like to know?" questioned the landlady still more sharply.

Mr. Wolley was humane, but Mr. Wolley was poor, with a mother and sisters who claimed and received his aid; so he paused a moment before he replied.

"If you will do all that is needful for the present I will call again in the course of the day, and then we can talk about the funeral and other matters. Mrs. Fitzallan may have left jewels or other effects, and perhaps to satisfy her friends it may be as well to put seals on the boxes and drawers."

"My claims must be paid before anything can be removed," observed the landlady.

"Certainly, that is but just," replied Mr. Wolley, "I have little doubt that her friends are well able to pay all demands, and reward

you for any kindness shown to the child, though there may be some difficulty for a time in finding those friends."

This suggestion put Mrs. Hopkins in better humour, and she performed the affairs about the dead with quiet decency, if not with feeling.

"Let me go back to dear mamma?—you promised I should long ago!" sobbed Amy Fitzallan, as Betty opened the door which she had locked on the poor child to keep her quiet as she said.

"Very well Miss Amy, you may go back now, but mind you must not disturb your mamma."

"Disturb her, was she only sleeping then?" cried Amy eagerly looking with eyes filled with a wild anxious joy into the speaker's face.

"Sleeping, no, no, she is dead enough. I mean you must be quiet and not make a screaming, or pull things about. Be a good child, don't give Mrs. Hopkins any trouble and now good bye."

"Good bye!" repeated the bewildered Amy, seeing a trunk in the passage and feeling for the first time the difference in Betty's manner—the sudden change from respectful attention to careless impertinence. "Are you going to grandpapa? Mamma said you would take me, but I cannot leave her so soon."

"How can I take you to your grandpapa when I don't know his name, or where he lives. Besides your mamma could not expect me to take you to him, for she knew yesterday I was going away, and paid me my wages whilst you were with Mrs. Bates."

"Oh don't go Betty!—don't leave me now!" cried the terrified child as she clung to her gown to detain her. "Dear mamma is gone, and if you go too who will take care of me?"

"God will take care of you, he is always a father to orphans."

"So dear mamma said," answered the child in more cheerful tones, her sorrow soothed and her young heart filled with pious trust by the

words which the worldly and time serving maid had spoken carelessly if not irreverently. Even now was her Heavenly Father looking down in pity on her desolate condition, and turning the evil of others into good for her.

“Yes to be sure Miss Amy, only be a good child and say your prayers, and you will sure to be rich and happy all your life—there good bye, and don’t sob any more.”

“Oh don’t go yet,—stay a little—a very little!” pleaded the weeping child who had an instinctive dread of being left to the tender mercies of Mrs. Hopkins.

“Nonsense, Miss Amy, I shall be too late for the carrier,” replied Betty sharply, tearing her gown from the grasp of the pleading Amy, and running down stairs to avoid further entreaty. “Poor little thing! I can’t think what will become of her, I wish I could get her last look out of my head,” was Betty’s thought as she jogged along in the carrier’s cart.

Amy stood for some moments where she had

left her the picture of despair, then, entering her mother's room, she crept towards the bed as if fearful that a ruder tread would wake some sleeper. A cry of anguish burst from her lips as she caught sight of the body laid out in its winding-sheet; she would have thrown her arms around it, but was restrained by a feeling of respectful reverence towards the dead, whose stony calmness seemed to rebuke the noisy sorrow of the living. A growing and mysterious awe hushed her wild grief, and she sat down beside the corpse, her little bosom heaving with the sobs repressed by a resolute will.

When Mr. Wolley returned, he found Amy keeping her lonely watch in the chamber of death, her former passionate bursts of grief replaced by a calmer, but still deeper sorrow. He spoke to her kindly, and the child looked up with grateful trust. He questioned her of the past, but learnt little more than he knew already. Her father who had been dead some

Poor thing ! an only child, the only comfort of her mother, the strong affections of her young, warm heart had been developed more than the powers of her mind, but 'mid the silent watches of the night, for even then she did not desert her post, deep, solemn thoughts came crowding on her fresh young spirit, deep thoughts beyond her years, and when slumber fell on her wearied lids, and the eyes of the body were closed, the eyes of the mind saw visions of bright and lovely things, and loving tones, and loving smiles filled her young soul with peace, and trust, and joy. Even then was her Heavenly Father watching over her, and often in after years 'mid the change and stir of life, would she look back to these hours of lonely watching and learn from thence lessons of trust and perseverance.

The placing the body in the coffin—the shutting from her view that dear loved face, caused a fresh burst of passionate grief, for it seemed to her like a second parting, and she

looked eagerly round for Mr. Wolley whose kindness had won her confidence ; but no Mr. Wolley was there, and day after day she listened in vain for the sound of his step on the stair.

He had promised to come yet came not.

"Nobody loves me now mamma is gone," was the poor child's passionate lament, as she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER III.

"LAUK! Mrs. Hopkins, to be sure you don't let the poor child be alone all day? and above all you don't let her watch alone by the corpse at night?" exclaimed the good natured baker's wife who had come over to enjoy a little neighbourly gossip.

"The child is very obstinate and will have her own way," replied Mrs. Hopkins sharply.

"She bellowed like a bull when we took her from the body, and so I am forced to let her bide, no one but Mr. Wolley can do anything with her."

"Suppose I go and talk to her a little, she will be moped to death poor thing! left all by herself day and night."

"You may go if you like, but she will look sour enough at you I can tell you, she always does as soon as any one goes into the room."

"Then it must be all on account of losing her mother, poor thing! for she never looked sour before, but was one of the sweetest tempered — nicest spoken — merriest young ladies I ever set eyes on; it was a pleasure to look at her pretty face, and hear her say, thank you, if you gave her anything. I have brought her a little cake here, and some flowers, she would often come over to my shop for a cake."

"Lady!" muttered Mrs. Hopkins, who was more than usually sharp from having heard

some one say that her lodgings would get a bad name, "I hope she may turn out a lady, and have rich friends, as Mr. Wolley thinks, or else I shall never get paid for all I have done for her and her mother. No one has claimed her yet."

"I would wager a whole batch of baking that Miss Amy is a lady as her mother was before her, ay, and her grandmother. There is something about the real gentry there is no mistaking. But supposing no one should come to claim her poor child! I have heard that you have a box of jewels, and things which would pay you a hundred times over."

"That is at it may be; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. To be sure the box is heavy, and Betty did say something about jewels, and that her mistress did not like it to be out of her sight, but Mr. Wolley put his seal upon it, so there is no looking in."

"Ah! poor gentleman! he will never put his seal to another box if what I hear is true. And

such a clever doctor, and such a kind, good man as he was too."

"What is the matter with him?" asked Mrs. Hopkins quickly.

"Oh! have not you heard? A night or two since, I am not quite sure which, as he was riding home his horse fell, or was frightened, or something, and poor Mr. Wolley was found in a ditch in the morning quite insensible, with his leg broken, and his head very much hurt; he has never been himself again since, talking about all sorts of strange things and there are some who think he won't get over it, but I am sure I hope he will."

"And so do I, or else who will pay me for the funeral, and the lodging, and all the other things. I should not wonder if he died just to spite me! I am always getting cheated for being good natured. Nobody else would have taken in the sick lady that nobody knew nothing about, and this is what comes of it, getting no money but only a bad name for the lodgings."

"Come, come, Mrs. Hopkins, you are pretty well to do in the world and Mrs. Fitzallan paid you two guineas for the lodging and you never had more than one before, and poor Mr. Wolley ain't going to die yet I hope, and so everybody hopes."

"Every body's hopes won't keep him alive, and I shall be sure to lose my money, I always do."

"Well, well, wait till you do Mrs. Hopkins, there is no use in fretting about a misfortune twice, once before it happens and again when it does. We read in the blessed Bible, God loves a cheerful giver, and to my mind he loves a cheerful liver too, who believes all He orders is best; and so it is if we would but think so. I will just step up and see the poor child now."

Oh! a true and beautiful creed was good Mrs. Marsh's, and might have put to shame the vain repinings of her betters.

"It is easy for folks to say that, when they have not got nothing to cross them," muttered

the discontented landlady as the kind hearted baker's wife passed up the stairs.

"Poor thing ! she is afraid of Mrs. Hopkins, and I don't wonder at it," thought Mrs. Marsh, as she marked how Amy had shrunk into a corner at the opening of the door. "I have brought you some flowers my dear ! and two or three of the cakes you used to be so fond of."

"Thank you," said Amy advancing timidly, raising her tearful eyes to the speaker's face, and letting them rest there, won by the kindly expression. "Thank you very much !" she repeated, and her tones were soft and sweet as before, but inexpressibly sad.

"I was sure she could not be sour," thought the baker's wife.

Amy took the flowers, kissed them, placed them on the coffin, and then looking at them as though they were the bearers of some message from her whom she had lost.

"I never saw anything so pretty in my life, it is quite a picture," thought the baker's wife,

wiping off the tears which she could not repress. "And now dear! eat the cakes and let us have a little talk together.—You must find it very unkind being here all by yourself?"

"Oh! thank you I cannot, I do not want to eat now dear mamma is gone."

"Oh! dear Miss Amy! but you must eat a little just to please me now I have brought the cakes, and I am sure your poor dear mamma would be vexed, if she could tell you were starving yourself."

"Would she really?" asked Amy with childish simplicity, drawing closer to her in glowing confidence.

"I am sure she would, and who knows but she may be looking down upon you now? Here, come and sit by me and eat the cakes."

Amy made no objection, and the good woman felt particularly happy as she saw the cakes disappear.

"Bless me! if there is not the clock striking four, and James will make all kinds of mistakes

if I don't hurry over to give out the bread. Heart alive! to think of my having staid here so long. Well, good bye now my little dear! and don't ye cry and take on so there is a love! Don't mind if Mrs. Hopkins should speak a little sharp, it is just her nature you see, and to my mind it is not a happy nature for herself more than for others. And don't take on so when they come to take the coffin away, it must be you know, and it ain't your dear mamma that is really in it after all, she is an angel in Heaven now I hope. And Mr. Wolley will soon be well again I dare say; and your friends will come and claim you, and it will all go right, things always do one way or another if we keep a brave heart and patient spirit, and put our trust in God. Good bye dear! I will see you again to-morrow, and send you in a nice, new, little twopenny loaf and some more cakes."

And so departed the kind-hearted, hopeful baker's wife, happy in having made another

happy, at least as happy as circumstances would admit. She was not near as rich in this world's goods as Mrs. Hopkins, but how much richer in the treasures of the heart, in trust—in hopefulness—in love—to all around her. That love which pays itself in doing and in giving—the heart's wealth far more precious than gold.

“Poor dear child!” was her thought as she crossed the street to the bakehouse. “I don’t expect that she is very comfortable with Mrs. Hopkins, I would not say anything unkind of a neighbour, but she seems to me to have been made of bad flour mixed up with some leaven or bitter yeast. But there, poor thing! I must not be hard upon her, she was left an orphan early, so had not a mother to make her kind and gentle-like, and we must make allowances if she is a little crusty now and then.” [Ah! if we all judged each other like dear, simple-hearted Mrs. Marsh!] “I will see that the poor child ain’t starved, but

do by her as I would wish others to do by our little Sarah if she were left the same. I am afraid she will take on dreadful to-morrow when they bury her mother, so I will take care and be in the way."

The good baker's wife was right, but Amy's grief on the morrow was wild and passionate, and made the more so, by the sharp rebuking tones of Mrs. Hopkins, who could not control her ill humour, or rather would not, when alone with the helpless orphan, whose health was giving way beneath ceaseless tears and lonely watching, joined to the nervous fear inspired by the heartless landlady.

Dressed in the mourning which she still wore for her father, the little creature followed her mother's coffin, unconscious of the comments made on her childish beauty; for a time disturbing the ceremony by her loud sobs alone, but when the coffin was lowered into the grave, bursting from the restraining grasp of Mrs. Hopkins, she would have thrown herself

upon it, had not the good baker's wife stepped forward just in time and caught her in her arms.

For a moment Amy struggled to free herself, then soothed by the kindly tones of her humble friend, she allowed herself to be carried back to the house, and even crammed with cake, a sovereign panacea in good Mrs. Marsh's opinion for most of the ills of childhood.

There sat the worthy woman beside the bed where Mrs. Fitzallan had died, with Amy clinging round her neck utterly forgetful for nearly the first time in her life, that the bread had been drawn out of the oven, and that James could never remember above two hours who was to have brown loaves, who white, who gallons, and who half gallons. Few circumstances could have afforded a higher proof of her interest in the orphan child than this.

Three weeks had passed since her mother's death, and there sat Amy listless and lonely in

the same room where her mother's corpse had lain, and nearly in the same attitude as when she had kept her mournful watch beside it. The once plump and happy face had grown thin and pale, and the meagre figure, sunken eyes, and yellow skin, all told of broken health as well as broken spirits.

"What are you doing here always moping about?" asked Mrs. Hopkins entering the room abruptly.

The poor child shrank back alarmed, abashed, and would have passed into the other room in silent submission, but the landlady placed herself in her way.

"What, go into my back parlour! a fitting place for you is not it? Who is to pay me for all that I have lost by your mother as it is? She was a lady forsooth! and had rich friends and relations who would come and take you away, and reward me for all my trouble. Where are they I wonder, I have not seen any thing of them. Then the jewels in that box

were to pay me. Jewels indeed! well might your beggarly mother never trust it out of her sight lest the cheat should be found out. Stones wrapped up and put in to make it heavy, with two farthings and a halfpenny to make a chink. Your mother was a regular cheat and swindler, and ought to have been sent to the treadmill."

"Mamma was not a cheat!" cried Amy boldly, indignation mastering for a moment her fear of the speaker. "I am sure she did not put stones in the box."

"Who did then, you impudent little brat? Do you mean to say I did?—when I took care to have the churchwarden by when all the seals were taken off and the boxes and drawers all opened. I will teach you better manners against next time," and here Mrs. Hopkins gave the child a box on the ear, delivered with such hearty good will as would probably have knocked her down had not Amy escaped some of its force by shrinking back. "It would

serve you right if I turned you out of doors."

"Let me go to Mrs. Marsh," sobbed the child in broken words.

"Oh! you think she would keep you do you?—and you would go and complain of my being cross as you did before? Take care I don't give you reason to complain. You have seen the last of Mrs. Marsh I should not wonder, for there she is laid up with a fever caught from her boy James, impudent young varlet as he is! She is raving they say, and it is a toss up whether she lives or dies. If you go even nigh her door, much more go inside, I will shut you up in the dark cupboard, and give you nothing but bread and water for the next month to come. You shan't be going over there to bring back the fever to me and my children. I have had one corpse in the house through my good nature and that has made me lose more than enough. I thought the clothes would have paid me something, but

they are scarcely worth a crown. And then there is the funeral, besides the lodging and attendance. Mr. Wolley told me to have all decent, and there now he is gone out of the country and they want me to pay for it. Catch me doing that. They say he is gone to London on account of his fall, to see some great doctor up there, but I don't believe no such thing ; it was only to get out of paying for the funeral. Ay, ay, I understand, it is all very fine to talk about pity and all that, and leave some body else to pay the piper. I am up to him now ; I only wish I had been up to him before. The parish may pay for the funeral, I won't ; and the parish must pay for my keeping you too, or you may just go and tramp with the gipsies. Do not make such a howling ; I am not going to be stunned. I suppose you thought Mr. Wolley or Mrs. Marsh were going to take you and bring you up a lady. A lady indeed !—a pretty lady your mother was to die in debt for her lodgings and not

leave clothes enough to pay for her funeral. To be sure she had a ring ; but it is not every one would take their oath she was a wife. If she had been a decent woman, her father would have taken her in, or some of her friends would have come and claimed you. There, don't stay howling there I tell you, but get up to your garret ; that is quite good enough for a little beggar like you, and mind you don't come into these rooms again, or it will be the worse for you !"

Here Mrs. Hopkins paused to gather breath, and Amy, glad to escape from her presence, hurried out of the room and up the narrow, creaking stair into the cold dark garret which was to be her chamber for the future. Here creeping into the furthest corner, and striving to smother the sobs which she could not wholly suppress she sat listening in breathless fear lest her tyrannical hostess should follow, or one of her ill taught children, having nothing better to do, come up to amuse herself by tormenting

the helpless orphan. And thus sat the poor child till night closed in, clasping the locket, her mother's last gift, and a lock of that mother's hair to her heart, her only consolation, peeping out of the window that looked towards the church-yard, and praying in the agony of her childish woe that she might, ere long, rest in the grave where they had laid her only parent. It is sad for a young child to pray to die !

No one cared to come to her, no one thought of bringing her food, and cold and hungry she crept to her hard, poor bed, rolling herself up in its single blanket to keep herself from freezing. The names of Wolley and Marsh mingling in her latest prayer, ere wearied by weeping she fell asleep. Had the poor child really no friend to soothe and protect her? Had Mrs. Bates lost all interest in her fate? Had the clergyman who buried her mother, never asked for the little girl whose sobs had sometimes nearly drowned his voice, and who,

if not prevented, would have thrown herself into her mother's grave?

That clergyman was a stranger, performing the ceremony for the absent rector, who quitted the neighbourhood the succeeding day; and Mrs. Bates could feel little interest for one who would probably end her days in the workhouse, or gain a living elsewhere only by servitude. She had made a few enquiries, but a hint from Mrs. Hopkins about giving something towards the keep of the child had checked all further queries. And thus poor Amy stood alone in the world, with no one to care for her, no one to love her; and the contrast of her fate from that of a few weeks before weighed heavily on her young and sensitive heart. Her warm affections thrown back upon herself were wearing her life away, and cold and hunger, harshness and fear, made every day fresh ravages in her slight and fragile form. Not that Mrs. Hopkins absolutely starved her, or prevented her approaching the fire, but the

now cowed and timid child so dreaded her presence, and that of her ill managed, ill natured children, that she hurried over her meals declining more food when she really needed it, that she might creep again to her lonely garret, and sit on the stairs outside the door of the room where her mother had died, when she deemed herself free from the surveillance of any of the Hopkins family. And there she would remain, if able, for hours, thinking of the fond mother now no more, and of that mother's parting words, that God would protect her orphan child, sometimes hoping, but as time passed on, more often despairing.

CHAPTER V.

"~~THERE~~ go into the kitchen and help Martha scour the dresser, I cannot afford to keep you idle any longer, moping about, and looking so sullen;" said Mrs. Hopkins one day when Amy was as usual creeping off to her garret. "You must learn to do something for your livelihood, though it won't be much I take it such a weak, sickly thing can do."

Tearful and trembling, poor Amy went into the kitchen to help the maid of all work, and

Mrs. Hopkins went out into the village to enjoy some neighbourly gossip.

“Good morning, Mrs. Hopkins,” began Mrs. Hodgson, as the former passed the Castle Coombe Arms. “How is Miss Fitzallan? Has her grandfather, the great lord, come down with four horses to carry her off?”

“No Mrs. Hodson, and never will, that was all a fancy of Mr. Wolley’s. If it had not been for him, I should have got quit of the mother and child at once; lucky for you she found the Castle Coombe Arms so noisy, and came to my quiet lodgings.”

“As for her finding the Castle Coombe Arms so noisy, it was all very well her saying so to bamboozle you Mrs. Hopkins, and she is the first who ever did say it in an unfriendly way, but the truth was, my good man and myself smelt a rat, and just gave her a hint to be off.”

“Very friendly to send her to me; I think you might have given me an inkling of this,” observed Mrs. Hopkins sharply.

"So I would, had you asked me Mrs. Hopkins, but you tossed your head in triumph at getting a lodger from our house, and so I said nothing."

There had long been a rivalry between these two thrifty James, and though decently civil when they met, as all the neighbours knew full well, there was no love lost between them.

"But of course you have been handsomely rewarded for all your trouble, or will be hereafter?" continued Mrs. Hodgson, who had a peculiar talent for finding out a wound and making it smart afresh.

"Not I indeed, I have not received a farthing and never shall. I always suffer for my good nature; it will be the ruin of me one of these days."

"I should not wonder," observed Mrs. Hodgson, with a dryness that sounded like incredulity.

"Yes, that it will, I ought to think more of my children, and not be so good natured to

strangers, charity should begin at home. But what did you and your good man suspect?"

"Many things, Mrs. Hopkins; we are not easily taken in, seeing such loads of customers as we do every day, we soon find out what people are. Now Mrs. Fitzallan, as she chose to call herself, pertended to be a widow, and yet I never once heard her talk of her poor dear husband! which all real widows do—any one can wear a gold ring."

"Then you think she was not a widow at all, and her child what they call a love-child Mrs. Hodgson?"

"I would not say it for certain, Mrs. Hopkins, I would not take away any one's character on no account, or say that a decent woman was no better than she should be; yet if I did think this, I should not be the only one in the village who did, by many. If it was not so, would not her father have received her do you think? and would not she have said where she was going to and what was his name? Not that I

would take away her character, that is if she had one, or any one's else, I was never given to that. But we must make a difference between the virtuous and the unvirtuous; and we thought it a good riddance when this Mrs. Fitzallan, or whatever she might be, took herself off. As I said before, it always looks 'spicious to me when a widow does not talk of her poor dear husband! But there, I dare say you will be well paid for this child one of these days. Perhaps the parish will pay you something, Mr. Harris is a friend of yours, people say."

"No wonder, Mrs. Hodgson, he was a friend of my poor dear husband, and therefore naturally has a regard for his widder and children, and won't let me suffer for my good nature. I have a right to receive something from the parish if I keep the brat in my house," replied Mrs. Hopkins, nettled at the allusion to Mr. Harris, the Overseer, knowing that many maintained she was setting her cap at him, and he

waiting to be sure of the extent of her means before he proposed.

Mrs. Hopkins continued her gossiping walk, and ere nightfall it was settled *nem. con.* in the village of Castle Coombe, that Mrs. Fitzallan as she called herself, despite the ring she wore, had never been a wife; that she was a cheat, and a swindler, and that the little Amy was a love-child, sickly, sullen, and obstinate; by no means a fit associate for the immaculate children of Castle Coombe. Before noon the next day, the term, love-child, was dinned in the ears of poor Amy, by the old and the young, the he and the she Hopkinses, and without exactly understanding what it meant, she shrank with shame at the word, judging it to be, from the tone in which it was uttered, a term of reproach and insult. Thus was another wound inflicted on the already bleeding heart of the sensitive child, and thus no friendly eye met hers, no friendly words fell on her eager ear.

“Doubt if the parish can allow me anything

for taking charge of that brat ; and talk of making me pay for the funeral too. People telling him, Mr. Harris says, that the child don't belong to the parish, (the old poor law was still in operation at this time,) and blaming him for paying me for the creature's board and lodging. Pretty thing forsooth, that I am to suffer for my good nature. But that is just the way of the world, every one tries to put on a poor defenceless woman. The child may go into the streets if they don't pay, and then they will have to pay for the funeral."

So muttered Mrs. Hopkins a few days later, on returning from another village walk. She was in a worse temper even than usual, having been ruffled, or, to use a fashionable word, excited, by the covert sneers of Mrs. Hodgson, and the doubts of Mr. Harris, and this ill humour and excitement were increased not lessened, by finding Amy idling in the kitchen.

"What is this I should like to know?" began the thrifty dame in her sharpest tone.

“ Did not I bid you help Martha? and there you are sitting doing nothing like a fine lady ! You will never earn salt to your porridge ; and don’t suppose salt or porridge either will fall into your mouth, for it won’t ; you must work for it I can tell you, ay and work monstrous hard too in these hard times. I shan’t keep you doing nothing, no not even if I keep you at all ; so jump up and bustle about, or you may just go and beg in the streets !”

“ The poor child is faintlike and can’t bustle about, ma’am,” said Martha, who had a kinder heart than her mistress, and sufficient spirit to resist her tyranny.

“ Nonsense, it is a pretence to get out of working.”

“ It ain’t no pretence at all, the poor child is very ill, and would have tumbled right down on the stones just now if I had not caught her.”

“ Then why does she sit here in the hot kitchen ? why does not she go out in the air ?”

“ Because the cold wind is sharp enough to

shave off the cat's whiskers, and she was quite shivery like just now, poor thing!"

"Shivering indeed, with such a fire as that. You burn more coals than your head is worth, Martha, though I am always telling you of it. It is fire enough to roast an ox; there take off those three large lumps."

"I don't see any marm," said Martha, a little pertly, it must be owned, but in truth there were no lumps which deserved the epithet, large.

"You won't see you mean, being impudent and obstinate, so I must take them off myself, and do you go into the air."

"Lauk marm! don't send the poor child into the cold, it will be the death of her I am sure."

"No great harm if it was, but I did not ask your opinion, and if you can't hold your tongue you must look out for a place elsewhere. Go out and take a little walk!" added Mrs. Hopkins turning with an imperious air to Amy.

Martha who stood in no awe of her mistress, partly because she considered that mistress only a little above herself, having formerly been lady's maid in a gentleman's family, and partly because she despised her on account of her stinginess, would have remonstrated further, but Amy whispering "I should like to go out," she held her peace, though doubtful of the prudence of such a proceeding.

"Make haste—don't stay idling and whispering there!" continued Mrs. Hopkins, balancing a piece of coal about three inches square in the tongs.

Amy slid off her chair, and crept towards the door as fast as her trembling limbs would move.

"Stop a bit," cried Martha, "you must not go out without nothing on, it is piercing cold. I will just run up and bring down your bonnet."

"You will do no such thing, I don't keep servants to wait on charity children!" exclaimed

Mrs. Hopkins in wrath. But Martha did not hear or would not heed; her laugh as she ran up stairs proclaimed the latter.

"There, that is all I could find; this torn old bonnet, and ragged handkecher that never belonged to you I am sure," cried Martha holding up what she had brought down, in the most contemptuous manner. "Where is the pretty little bonnet, and nice, warm shawl you used to have, Miss? You will be frozen with the cold in these."

"They are good enough for a beggar whose mother swindled honest people," observed Mrs. Hopkins colouring highly. "There, make haste out, and mind you don't go near Mrs. Marsh's, or you shall catch it!"

"Don't stay out long, or the cold will be the death of you!" whispered Martha, as she tied on the old, torn bonnet, and arranged the ragged kerchief as warmly as she could.

"There would be no harm if it was," said the

child, in accents that went to the heart of the good natured Martha. "Thank you very much."

"Don't coddle up the brat in that way! No wonder she is ill, though I don't believe a word of it," cried Mrs. Hopkins sharply, proceeding to the parlour.

Scarcely venturing to glance at Mrs. Marsh's lest her tyrant should be looking, poor Amy passed up the street with downcast eyes, neither turning to the right or the left.

"What do you walk in the middle of the path for, pushing against your betters?" observed a sour voice.

Recovering herself from the shock, for she had been the pushed, not the pushing, Amy glanced up at the speaker. It was Mrs. Bates with her two girls, who, after staring at her for a few seconds, walked on with contemptuous looks.

Before they passed out of hearing, she caught

the words "beggar, and swindler," words that fell on her heart like the branding iron on the quivering flesh, bringing fresh to her mind all the scornful jests and bitter sneers of Mrs. Hopkins and her children. Her thin, pale face was bowed lower on her bosom, and she went on her way with a quicker, yet more timid step, creeping along at the very edge of the path, and never once raising her eyes, lest she should read still more cutting reproofs in the faces of those whom she met.

She reached the wicket that opened into the church-yard, glanced hastily round to see that she was not watched, then, gliding through, rushed to her mother's grave, and throwing herself upon it, sobbed as though her heart would break.

The bright autumnal tints which had won Mrs. Fitzallan's admiration on the day of her death were now nearly gone, instead of a gladdening sun, there was a cold, raw mist ; the

wind swept through the branches of the trees with a wild, wailing moan, shaking off the little foliage left ; and showers of damp, cold leaves fell on the weeping girl, and strewed the high, wet grass. The leaves were unfelt, the wailing wind unheard, the child was alone with her grief, and the heart of the young and desolate girl too full of its first deep woe to have room for the feeling of cold or fear.

Bitter was the north wind ; but not one-half as cold as the icy chill that had fallen on her own warm heart. Nor was the howling breeze one-half as harsh and grating on her ear, as the bitter taunts of low and selfish cunning.

The freezing wind, the cold, damp leaves, the chilly earth, were for a time unheeded, so wild was the tumult of grief within ; there was no calm left to receive the impressions of things without, the long pent up tears burst forth in a passionate gush, and clinging round

the grave as though it had been her mother's form, she called on that mother to take her away from the scornful and harsh, and give her a place beside her! The last faint glimmer of hope was gone—the darkness of despair had come. "God will protect you my child, I leave you to His care!" were her mother's parting words, and till now those words had shed a gleam of light athwart the gloom of her after lot, but now she felt forsaken by God as well as man, her childish, hopeful trust was gone, and nothing now was left her but the passionate longing to lie down and die, to rest in the grave by her mother's side. Bitter, indeed, must be the woe which makes so young a child dead to the joys and hopes of life.

Amy was young, too young to understand why God afflicts, or how, at His word, the light of dawn springs out of the darkness of night—how evil is made to work for good, eternal if not temporal, to those who love and

place their trust in Him—and “how sorrow,”
to use the touching language of poor L. E. L.,
“is indeed, the Angel who sits at the gate of
Heaven !”

CHAPTER VI.

THE wilder the storm, the sooner the lull. By degrees the passionate grief of the lonely child became more calm, worn out by its own violence, and then, and not till then, did she feel the cold and night damp. Pressing her lips to the earth, she arose, and seating herself beside the grave, drew from her bosom the relics so fondly cherished there, the locket and letter placed in her hands by her dying mother, and

a lock of that mother's hair. She took no note of time—she thought not of returning to Mrs. Hopkins—she would not, she dared not think of that ; her head grew giddy if she did ; she only thought of dying on her mother's grave ! So there she sat in the keen November wind, with tangled hair, for her combs and brushes had been taken by the young Hopkinses, as well as her clothes, shivering in the cold, her pale face looking almost ghastly, her shrunken eyes red with weeping, faint and hungry, cowering down to keep herself out of the sweep of the wintry blast, yet hugging to her breast the parting gifts of the fond parent now no more.

“ Hey day ! what are you at here ? Are the dishes all washed ? ” cried a harsh voice beside her.

Poor Amy started up with a scream. Absorbed in her sorrow, she was unconscious of the presence of others. Before her, stood Stephen Hopkins, a boy of fourteen, one of her

most cruel tormentors, and by his side, Master Bates about three years younger. Trembling with fear she sank down without speaking, shrinking into as small a space as she could, as though in the vain hope of escaping further comment.

"What are you doing here I say? And why don't you answer when I speak to you? I will teach you to be sullen—What have you got in your hand?" continued Stephen, making a snatch at the locket, which she had hitherto contrived to keep out of his sight.

"Mamma gave it me the night she died," faltered poor Amy, thrusting her treasures inside her frock as fast as she could, and fearful to increase his ill will by giving no reply.

"Let me see it."

"Oh! no, no.—No one must see it," cried Amy, certain, from experience, that once in the hands of Stephen Hopkins, there it would remain.

"But I will see it!" replied Stephen in anger, again making a snatch at the locket as he spoke.

"Oh! don't let him take it!" cried Amy looking at Master Bates, who had called her his little wife, his little love! the day she had gone to his mother's house, and committed a thousand boyish follies to win the smiles of his sister's pretty playfellow.

"That is a good un!" exclaimed Stephen Hopkins with an insulting laugh. "As if Master Bates would help such a little dirty beggar to keep what is not her own. Your mother was a cheat, so we have a right to all she left, and precious little that was too, for a lady as she called herself. A pretty lady truly, could not pay for her own funeral."

"Mamma did not cheat!" cried Amy passionately.

"She did, you little beggar! Give me the thing directly or I will beat you black and blue!"

"You shall kill me first!" cried Amy, roused

to resistance by the insolent manner, and the remembrance of her dying mother's injunction, never to part with the locket.

"Serve you right if I did, you little thief! stepping back and looking so proud. Do you think I care for your airs? mother will give it you for them. I will have the trinket any how."

"Save me! save me!" screamed poor Amy, excited to the hope of succour by hearing footsteps behind her, and springing back to avoid the rude grasp of Stephen, who tore off her bonnet in endeavouring to detain her. "Save me! Oh! save me!" cried Amy still more passionately, as a slight, pale, boy of gentlemanly bearing, stepped forward to her side.

"I will," said the stranger boy.

The words were few, the voice was low, but the look and tone were so resolute, so self confiding, and withal so kind, that the deserted girl placed her hand in his, assured of protection now, if not hereafter.

"What will you do young whipper snapper?" asked Stephen, scornfully.

"Protect this little girl," replied the boy, with the same calm, firm tone, showing no other trace of passion than a deep flushing on his pale, thin cheek.

"And how will you set about it Master whipping post? Why I am double your size and strength."

"It is not a strong arm, but a strong mind and good cause that wins."

"Ho! ho! we will soon try that. Or suppose I could not lick you myself, here is Master Bates to help me."

"Two to one. A fit thing for a coward to do, who could threaten to beat a girl!"

"I am no coward as you shall find young skin and bone!" exclaimed Stephen in wrath, amazed at the stranger boy's calm, but cutting reproof. "Make the little beggar give up the trinket, and beg my pardon for your impudence,

or I will beat you both within an inch of your lives."

"I shall do neither, so you may do your worst," replied the boy, preparing himself to meet the threatened attack, as he whispered Amy to run home, little thinking, alas! what a home hers was.

"No, no," sobbed Amy, "you must not be hurt for me. Here take the locket and give him, mamma will not be angry, you are so kind."

"I shall do no such thing," said the boy, putting back the locket which she held with a trembling hand towards him. "Stand in that corner there if you won't go home, he shall not touch you if I can help it."

"But you can't help it," cried Stephen, aiming a blow at the boy's eye which was only half avoided. "I will beat you to a jelly first, and then I will beat her the same!"

"We will see," said the boy, his dark eyes flashing fire as he sprang on his insulting op-

pressor, giving loose to the indignation which, young as he was, he had before controlled.

“Take care or I shall twist you into rags!” cried Stephen, who was in truth nearly double the size of his slender opponent, who conscious of his inferior strength if they came to blows, twined round his adversary like an eel, his lithesome limbs turning round like willow wands.

They fell to the ground writhing, grappling, now one uppermost and now the other; the rage of Stephen venting itself in oaths and abuse, till the exhaustion of the struggle checked his words; the anger and indomitable spirit of the other shown only in the desperate energy with which he continued the combat, even when conscious that his strength was failing fast, and that he must succumb ere long. Master Bates stood looking on like a patronising amateur, taking no further part in the fight than encouraging Stephen by a few slang expressions, such as “go it,” &c. whilst Amy

filled the air with her screams, only prevented, girl as she was, from trying to assist her protector by her inability to decide how this could be best accomplished.

"How now, Cecil! What fighting?" exclaimed an elderly gentleman dressed in mourning, who had hurried across the churchyard on hearing Amy's shrieks. "I had hoped your naturally impetuous spirit was kept under better control. Let me see no more of this, it ill fits the son of a minister of peace to be brawling here among the dead, and in the sight of God's holy house."

"I fought to defend another, and that a defenceless girl!" said Cecil, rising breathless and flushed from the unequal combat.

"It was my fault—do not blame him—he was so kind—so very kind!" faltered poor Amy.

Mr. Alleyne, the rector of Castle Coombe, turned in surprise towards this faltering speaker. Dirty, ragged, with wild, matted hair, and skin

that wore the sickly hue of disease; still there was something about the child to win and rivet attention. The tone and manner were those of one highly born and bred, making the contrast of her ragged garments strange and startling; but it was the energy, the earnestness of her looks and tone, the mingled boldness and timidity of attitude, and most of all the tearful lustre of the large brown eyes, dimmed though they were by her late weeping, which constrained and commanded the interest of the beholder.

“No, don’t blame her, sir; she begged me not to fight, but I could not stand by and see her robbed and beaten,” observed Cecil rather proudly, hurt at the rebuking tone of his reprover.

“Who would have robbed and beaten her?” asked Mr. Alleyne, turning from Amy to look on the other combatant. “What you Stephen Hopkins? Would you rob a poor child; and then fight with my grandson because he would

not allow it? I am grieved and shocked to hear this."

"How should I guess it was your grandson, when I never saw him before, and did not know you were come back?" replied Stephen doggedly.

"I will say nothing of its being my grandson, Stephen, but he is a delicate boy not half your size; to fight at all is sinful: to fight him cowardly! and to rob or beat that poor trembling child is worse than all. The helpless are God's own peculiar care, and they who seek to injure them will feel His vengeance. It is to the meek that He has promised the inheritance of the earth—it is to the poor in spirit that He says, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is yours.'"

"Young master there was impudent, and that little beggar has got what does not belong to her," answered the sulky Stephen, glaring at Cecil. "Her mother was a

swindler, and cheated my mother out of lots of money."

"Don't believe him!" cried Amy, passionately; "mamma was good—mamma did not cheat any one!"

"That is a lie, you little beggar! Your mother was no better than she should be, and cheated mine out of board, and lodging, and what not. Come along with me directly!"

"Oh! don't let him take me!" pleaded the terrified child starting back from his grasp, and involuntarily placing her hand in that of Cecil, while her imploring eyes were turned from him to his grandfather.

"Don't be frightened; we will see you safe home," said Cecil, before Mr. Alleyne could reply.

"I have no home now!" said Amy, and her tone was touchingly sad.

"No home, my poor child!" observed Mr. Alleyne, kindly. "Where is your mother?"

"There—there," sobbed Amy pointing to the grave with a fresh burst of grief.

Tears started into the eyes of Mr. Alleyne, and his grandson.

"Where are your other friends and relatives?" questioned the former with warm interest.

"I have no friends—nobody loves or cares for me now!" sobbed Amy in reply; then glancing up with a wild excitement in look and tone, she added,

"They say I shall not live long. Oh! I wish I was dead now!"

"Hush! hush! my child," said Mr. Alleyne, placing his hand on her head in gentle and pitying reproof. "This rebellion against God's will is sinful, but you are young and know not how sinful yet. How old are you?"

"Eight yesterday, and no one kissed me, no one blessed me!"

"Poor child!" said Mr. Alleyne, while

Cecil pressed her small, thin hand in sympathy.

"Don't believe a word she says, she is a little liar ! Come home to tea !" cried Stephen, who was old enough, and cunning enough, to comprehend the impolicy of allowing Mr. Alleyne to obtain a clear view of the child's real condition.

"Don't make me go with him, and I won't trouble any one !" pleaded the trembling child. "Only let me lie here and die ! I shall soon be with mamma."

"No, no, my child, you must not lie there ; it is cold and damp, and will soon be dark."

"I don't mind the cold, or the damp, or the darkness, only don't send me back with him ; they are all so—"

"All so what ?" asked Mr. Alleyne, as the child stopped abruptly, checked by a threatening gesture from Stephen. "No one shall hurt you for telling the truth."

"They are all so unkind—they will beat me!" whispered poor Amy, shuddering as she spoke.

"I must enquire into this," said Mr. Alleyne, after soothing the terrified child with a promise of protection. "The difficulty is, to know of whom to enquire."

"I think I can tell you as much as most people about that little girl sir," remarked a tall, thin female, with a prim, formal manner, stepping forward. "Supposing this is the child Mrs. Marsh has been telling me of, though she does not look much like a lady's child I must say, so ragged and dirty."

"These are not the clothes dear mamma gave me," said Amy quickly, reddening up to the very temples at the charge of dirt and rags. "They took away all my things, and make me do dirty work."

"Oh! my, you lying little beggar!" exclaimed Stephen Hopkins in pretended horror at her wickedness. "To say this when we were al

so kind to you, though your mother did cheat and swindle us out of so much. If I don't tell mother how you lie!" and so saying Stephen took his departure, to prepare Mrs. Hopkins for the future. For when the good Rector undertook to right the wronged, it was well known that he never stopped till all that man could do was done.

"It is all true, indeed it is, only ask Mrs Marsh!" said Amy, glancing from one to the other. "They say washing wastes water, and uses soap, and it does not matter how dirty and ragged I am for nobody cares for me now!"

"Shocking," exclaimed Mrs. Jelf, the house-keeper at Castle Coombe, who had a house-keeper's proper horror of dirt and wickedness. "I never heard anything so dreadful—Waste water indeed, and use soap. Poor child!"

"Who was her mother Mrs. Jelf, as you know all that is known of this poor child?" asked Mr. Alleyne gravely, though scarcely able to suppress a smile at the worthy woman's super-

abundant horror, at the wickedness of non-ablution.

"She called herself Mrs. Fitzallan, a widow, but some in the village I am shocked to say, doubt whether she was ever married."

"Oh yes she was, I am sure she was!" cried Amy resolutely, aware from the taunts of the Hopkineses, that such a report affected the good character of her mother, though she was too young to comprehend clearly why. "I am sure she was for I heard her say so, and then she cried because grandpapa was not there I suppose."

"I hope it may prove so," said Mrs. Jelf, a prim old maid of fifty, with, some thought, over particular notions as to propriety, but who beneath a formal exterior hid a warm and feeling heart. "Let the mother be what she would, I fear the poor child has been hardly used," she added, and stepping aside with Mr. Alleyne, she told him all she had learnt from Mrs. Marsh and others.

“Here they come mother, all of ’em!” cried Stephen Hopkins. “I told you they would, so I shall be off. You don’t need me to help you to tell lies,” and away went the honest and dutiful son, leaving his thrifty parent to make good her own story if she could. “Mother is sharp but she won’t do the parson, for somehow or other he always finds out the truth,” was Stephen’s thought as he slipped out at the back door, giving Martha a push as he passed, from sheer ill humour.

Stephen was right, his mother was sharp, and did not need him to tell lies for her, but nevertheless she could not “do the parson,” whose high integrity commanded respect, even where his gentleness failed to win love.

“Mrs. Hopkins was obliged to give up everything left by the late Mrs. Fitzallan, even to the watch found behind her pillow, and which had thus escaped being sealed up by Mr. Wolley; and Mr. Alleyne, after remonstrating with her on her cruelty, of which the

child's ill looks, and nervous fear were proof sufficient, and paying all she could fairly claim, quitted the house accompanied by the little Amy, who clung to Cecil's hand, as the timid and grateful cling to those from whom they feel certain of receiving kindness and protection.

"She does look a little more respectable now, and almost pretty when she speaks," observed Mrs. Jelf, who walked behind with the good rector, while the children went on before, pointing to Amy as she spoke, who had been hastily dressed by Martha, in the frock, bonnet, and shawl, which Mrs. Hopkins would fain have appropriated to herself. "And I like the way she took leave of the maid, she has a grateful temper I think."

"I think she has," replied Mr. Alleyne, a thought converted into a conviction by the delight with which Amy exclaimed at that moment, clasping her hands with real joy. "There is dear, kind Mrs. Marsh at the win-

dow! May I run in and see her?"

"Better not to-day," said Mrs. Jelf, "this is her first day of sitting up, and she must not be tired."

"To-morrow then perhaps?" said Amy, kissing her hand to the good baker's wife who was watching for her; one of the neighbours having reported the Rector's visit to Mrs. Hopkins.

The ready docility and good humour with which Amy yielded, went far to win the heart of Mrs. Jelf, who considered obedience to be one of the greatest virtues, while it disproved the assertion of Mrs. Hopkins, that she was sullen and obstinate.

"Here miss, mother has sent you these cakes, and hopes to be well enough to see you to-morrow," said the baker's boy, who had been so fond of gathering flowers for the pretty little lady, as he always called her. "We have both been ill and like to die, and father could not think of anything but us, or else you should

have had some before. I hope Mrs. Hopkins han't tried to starve you, you looks very poorly. But I must not stay talking here or the fever will come back, it is so cold," and nodding kindly yet respectfully to Amy, and making his best bow to the Rector and Mrs. Jelf, for the latter considered herself and was considered by others a grand person in the village, Jem Marsh as he was called, to distinguish him from his father, ran back into the shop, pulling up the collar of his coat for fear of catching cold, so sharp was the keen north wind.

A piece of dry bread and two half boiled potatoes, was all poor Amy had eaten that day, and there was to the full, as much hunger as gratitude in the eager glance which she cast on the cakes, but checking herself ere her little fingers had touched them, she offered them first to the Rector and Mrs. Jelf, and would taste none herself till Cecil had taken what she thought the nicest. Her eager manner of

eating showed how hungry she really was. All this had been marked by her new made friends, and the hearts half won before, were now wholly hers.

“Poor child! she must be taken care of,” said Mr. Alleyne, speaking rather to himself than his companion, a habit of his when pondering on that which puzzled him. “Her air and conversation proclaim her of good birth and breeding, but she seems deserted by all her relatives and thrown on the kindness of strangers. Her mother has left nothing of value except her watch, that is if we are to believe Mrs. Hopkins, and the inventory; and there seems no clue to discover her connections on either side. My means are scanty, and this foreign journey, and Grey’s expensive illness have left me little to give away; but a deserted orphan has a claim on all christian hearts which must not be denied. Would that my daughter were alive, for I am growing old and know

little of the bringing up of girls: but I must do my best. It was God's will to call my daughter early to himself, and I doubt not His will was good, though it was hard to think so at the time."

"Ah! poor Miss Jane! she was the sweetest lady I ever knew," replied Mrs. Jelf, echoing the good minister's sigh. "And Master Cecil seems to take after her, only he has some of his papa's fire too, and all the better perhaps, poor Mrs. Grey was too gentle to make her way in this world. How should she when her heart was so much in the next. As for this poor child, sir, with your good leave, I think she had better go home with me for a time at least, till we see what she is likely to turn out. For a man cant know much about the bringing up of a girl, how should he? and it wants a respectable well mannered female, to teach a girl how to behave with propriety."

"Perhaps it does," said the good rector, a

half smile chasing away his sadness, as he looked at the prim, formal figure who walked with a mincing step beside him.

Mrs. Jelf, as she chose to be called, had her peculiarities and her particularities, her failings and her foibles; but she had many good and sterling qualities to set against them in the other scale. She could not abide immorality, or forwardness, as she was wont to say, and the scandalous doubted whether the last was not counted as heinous a sin as the first; but no one felt more truly for real suffering, or was more anxious to alleviate it.

"I am sure it does!" she replied with greater emphasis. "It is only a woman who can teach a woman how to behave. So this little girl shall go with me to the Castle now, and then we can settle what to do with her afterwards. Perhaps, I may place her in the housekeeper's room, if I find her decent and clean; I shall want some one to help me when the family come back."

"Thank you Mrs. Jelf, for helping me out of a dilemma ; but I know your kindness of old, and the father's voice faltered as he remembered how well she had nursed his daughter, Mrs. Grey. We can, as you say, settle about her future station hereafter."

While this discussion was going on among the elders, the young ones were carrying on a discourse after the fashion of their years ; the boy of twelve looking down with a kind, but protecting air on the girl of eight, and she in her turn looking up with a grateful feeling, amounting almost to affectionate reverence, at the delicate boy of twelve, who had fought with her tyrant, nearly double his size, to save her from a beating, getting, himself, a black eye and sundry bruises for so doing.

"Good bye sir, and thank you very, very much !" said Amy to Mr. Alleyne, as they stood at the Castle door, not the front door ;

Mrs. Jelf never allowed any one but grand visitors to go in or out of that door when the family were away. "I hope you won't blame him, sir, for not letting Stephen Hopkins beat me and take the locket," she added timidly, yet earnestly, blushing and looking down.

"Not I, indeed, my child. I like the courage that springs from generous motives, and if anything of passion be mingled with his humanity, I leave him to settle that with his conscience; he has been taught to look into his own heart and read the failings there. But you are shivering now, notwithstanding that warm shawl.

"Yes, sir, I am very—very cold."

"Cold, and with that burning hand. This is not as it should be, Mrs. Jelf, but you are a good doctress and nurse, and will see to it.

"You may depend on that, Mr. Alleyne. The child looks very ill."

“ Good bye, little Amy ; I will come and see you to-morrow,” were Cecil's parting words, and Amy thought she had heard none so sweet since her mother's death.

CHAPTER VII.

"MAY I not get up?" asked Amy, looking imploringly at Mrs. Jelf, as she finished the last spoonful of broth which the worthy house-keeper had been coaxing her to take.

"Don't be impatient, children should never be impatient; you are not strong enough to sit up yet."

"Oh! yes I am sure I could sit up, my head is quite well now," replied Amy, her eager

tones forming a strong contrast to the calm speech, and formal manner of her nurse and protectress.

"You would find yourself mistaken if I let you try; children never know what is best for them, and should do as their elders tell them without remonstrance."

"Only one little half hour!" pleaded Amy timidly.

"What can you want to get up so for?"

"Cecil promised to come and see me, and he talks like mamma."

"Cecil indeed, such familiarity does not become you. Master Grey, you mean," observed Mrs. Jelf reprovingly.

"He told me to call him Cecil," said Amy, hanging her little head in shame at the reproof.

"He said yesterday he would come and see me to-day, and I want to know if Stephen hurt him much. I have been dreaming about him and poor mamma all night."

"Yesterday child, why it is three weeks ago

since Master Grey fought with that good for nothing Stephen Hopkins! You were taken that night with the fever, and have been in bed with it ever since, and never yourself the whole time till this morning."

"Three weeks!" repeated Amy, passing her hand across her brow, as though to dispel some illusion. "And who nursed me all that time?"

"I did to be sure, and Mrs. Marsh sometimes, but I did not dare trust her alone with you much, for she would have been the death of you else, always wanting to cram you."

"How very kind of you and Mrs. Marsh," said Amy kissing the hand which was arranging her pillow. "I thought nobody cared for me now poor mamma is gone."

"Don't think that child, many care for you. Be good and obedient and you will have plenty of friends. Why Mr. Alleyne has been two or three times a day to see how you were going on, and Master Grey too, listening outside

your door for an hour together, and there they are now I should not wonder."

"How are you my child?" asked Mr. Alleyne, approaching the bed and taking the little thin hand in his.

"Much better—nearly well, thank you sir," answered Amy, raising her tearful eyes to his face, for his tenderness of look and tone, his words 'my child' had touched her young heart, and bound her to him by the strong ties of love and gratitude.

"In a young lady's bed-room Master Grey—I am shocked at you!" exclaimed Mrs. Jelf, perceiving that Cecil had followed his grandfather into the room, and was shaking hands with Amy.

"They think nothing of such things abroad where he has been," observed Mr. Alleyne excusingly.

"You don't say so sir! Such things will never be done in England I hope, not in my time at least."

"They are too young to make it any harm Mrs. Jelf, so let the children have their talk here, whilst we have ours by the window," replied the good Rector with a benevolent smile, amused at the worthy woman's ultra propriety.

"I have been longing to see you, and to show you the books I promised," began Cecil Grey, with the manner of a kind elder brother.

"And I have been wanting to see you, to know if that wicked Stephen hurt you much. Oh! yes he did, I see the black mark on your face even now. And this was all for me and I can do nothing for you."

"Yes Amy you can, you can be my little sister and love me very much. I always wanted a sister to play with, and the only one I ever had died very soon. Will you be my little sister?"

"Oh yes, and love you very much. I have no one to love now dear mamma is gone."

"For shame master Grey! for shame child! for shame—I am shocked! astounded!" exclaimed.

Mrs. Jelf advancing to the bed in a perfect horror, as Cecil sealed the bond of their childish agreement on Amy's lips.

"Run off Cecil, the poor child has had quite enough of talking for to-day," said Mr. Alleyne, unable to suppress a smile at the prim house-keeper's consternation ; had he laughed outright even he might not have been forgiven. " They are but children, Mrs. Jelf," he added in a lower tone, " do not let us make them think themselves man and woman by our putting an evil construction on their childish acts. Cecil may find the parsonage dull without a plaything or playfellow, and yet his health is too delicate to allow of my sending him to school. He has taken a fancy that this child is like his little sister who died. Let him treat and consider her as such ; he may the sooner recover from the shock of his father's death. My sole remaining tie to earth, my daughter's child, I feel more anxious for him than I should. I could not bear to see him fade away as his poor

mother did; and yet if God so willed it, he could send strength as well as suffering. You will let them be much together, Mrs. Jelf, it may divert his thoughts?"

"Certainly, sir, if you put it in that way," replied the worthy housekeeper, carried by her sympathy for the good rector, out of her firmness.

Amy was by no means as well as she believed; the recent fever, joined to her previous suffering had so weakened a naturally delicate frame, that it was some weeks before she could walk across the lawn without support, and many more before she was restored to perfect health. And yet the time of her recovery seemed neither long nor tedious, for Cecil Grey would sit for hours beside her bed or easy chair, telling her of all he had seen abroad, while accompanying his father in search of health, showing her the prints and curiosities he had brought home; singing to her the songs of other lands, or teaching her the tongues of

the countries in which he had sojourned, and which he spoke with a facility and fluency beyond his years. If he had an attentive listener to his tales, he found a still apter pupil to his teaching, and poor Mrs. Jelf was amazed to hear her talking in what seemed to her unknown tongues, whilst even Mr. Alleyne was astonished at her facility in learning all that her young protector taught, though her more especial talent appeared to be that of acquiring foreign languages.

"How happy they look there sitting side by side," remarked Mrs. Jelf, directing the good rector's attention to Cecil and Amy, who were seated together on an antique couch in the grand gallery, at Castle Coombe, he teaching her the notes on the guitar, which he had learnt to play in Italy, she laughing at her own awkward attempts to strike the notes as she should, and making him do the same by the gay drollery of her remarks.

This said grand gallery, as it was called,

running the whole length of one of the wings of the Castle, besides family fixtures and family curiosities, contained also, the family library, rich in modern as well as ancient books, and here did Mr. Alleyne, with the full permission of the Earl, spend many a winter morning, or cool summer evening. In fact the library had been left by the Earl in his charge, and there were few days in the year that he might not be found there at one hour or another, bending over some favourite work, holding communion with some favourite author. He did not read that the world might call him learned, he cared nothing for the world's opinion on that point ; his was a burning thirst for knowledge, not the desire of display.

These daily visits, as may be supposed, brought him often in contact with the careful housekeeper, and these constant meetings, joined to her attention to his dying daughter, had lessened the distance between their respective positions, and caused Mr. Alleyne

to regard her more as a friend than a domestic. He knew that she belonged to a good, though now poverty-stricken family, reduced from the higher station which she had held in her childhood, to gain her living as she best could, and even while sometimes smiling at her boasts and lamentations on the subject, and the dignity she maintained in consequence, he failed not to admire the plain, good sense—the strong integrity, and independent spirit which had induced her to accept what she sometimes considered a situation beneath her, rather than be a hanger on among churlish relatives, a slave to their humours, and caprices. Left early a beggar, through the extravagance of her father, who had dissipated in riot the little left by his predecessors, she had been taught none of the accomplishments, and reared in none of the luxuries of a lady ; but, on many points, she had a lady's feelings.

“ Happy, indeed,” replied Mr. Alleyne, glancing up from a work which he

was reading in his favorite winter corner. "They care little for the wind and rain without, thinking only of each other. Keep peace within, Mrs. Jelf, and one hears but little of the storm which rages without."

"Very true, sir—yes, very true; but then it is not always so easy to keep peace within, as I often find to my cost. One's temper is often sorely tried in such a large establishment as this. It is so much trouble to keep things clean and tidy, unless you look after all yourself. I do think people get dirtier every day."

"I hope not," said the rector with a good humoured smile.

"Ah! sir, you always hope for the best, but if you knew the number of dusters and house-cloths used in the Castle, you would be quite frightened."

"Then I won't enquire, and you must not tell me. I see every thing neat and clean, and would believe it effected by fairies; do not de-

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stroy the illusion by telling me of the wear and tear of cotton, flax, and wool."

"Clean sir, why look at the dust on your coat."

"My own fault, Mrs. Jelf, for peeping about in an out of the way corner after an old book," replied Mr. Alleyne, brushing off a few grains of dust from his sleeve.

"There ought to be no out of the way corners at Coombe Castle, and never shall be if I can help it. But that is always the way with the housemaids, they care for nothing but just the outward show. I would have the coal hole as free from dust as the grand saloon, and I am most particular about the library here, knowing you like to take down the old books. But there, I see you are thinking me over particular, and it was not the dust I wanted to speak about. It is just getting into March, and time we settled something about the bringing up of Miss Amy."

"That point seems pretty well settled with-

out our holding a set discussion on the subject. Cecil has adopted her as his sister, and is teaching her everything he knows himself, even to Latin and Greek, I believe."

"I hope not sir. What can be the use of Latin or Greek, or such like heathenish things to a girl like her?"

"The use," repeated Mr. Alleyne. "There are many who ask the use of the beautiful and ideal, and think they show their wisdom by the question, living in sense, but dead to the loftier stirrings of the immortal spirit. I won't ask you the use of the beautiful adornments you place on the table, but leave you to discuss the value of Latin and Greek with my grandson, who has appointed himself the child's tutor. It is none of my doing, save that I taught Cecil; boys must learn Latin and Greek, so the world says at least. The good which the many gain from this learning, is no concern of mine, being too old to run a tilt with the world in matters that touch not religion or morality."

"It is all very well, sir, for boys to learn Latin and Greek, I know they must, and it may do them good, but it is a bad thing for girls. I have heard many gentlemen say they did not like learned wives."

"Speculating on Amy's marriage already Mrs. Jelf; of all people in the world I did not expect this from you."

"One must look forward a little, sir," stammered Mrs. Jelf, colouring down to the tips of her fingers at the rector's meaning smile. Then assuming a more formal air than usual, in order to cover her confusion, she continued, using long words where short ones would have done just as well or better :

"It is the poor, deserted orphan's future destination which I would recommend to your particular consideration."

"That destination is already decided by you and Cecil, and I have only to submit; you may look your denial of this Mrs. Jelf, yet nevertheless it is the simple truth. Cecil is resolved

that she shall be accomplished if not learned, and you fully understand, though you may not have said so, that the little, dirty, ragged beggar, can neither become an assistant in Mrs. Marsh's bake-house, as I hear the good woman has proposed, nor your future successor in the office which you now fill so well."

"Well I won't deny—"

"No don't Mrs. Jelf, or I should for once be obliged to disbelieve you. The child is wonderfully changed, thanks to your care and kindness, and we both understand that her mother was a lady, in the best sense of the word, and that her own tastes will lead her to something different to what you proposed on seeing her first."

"Ladies may be reduced by misfortune to undertake offices considered beneath them," observed Mrs. Jelf, drawing herself up into greater stiffness.

"There may be, and there have been; and I honor those who, bending to a higher will,

fulfil their duties in such offices, not only with strict probity but resignation and good temper. They merit praise for bearing well a heavy trial, but Amy's tastes tend another way, she has a thirst for knowledge, and a strong and instinctive taste for the beautiful in art and nature."

"What is to be done with her then?" asked Mrs. Jelf, unable to deny that the child, when alone, had always a book, or prints in her hand.

"Not send her away, we could not part with her now. Cecil has been a different creature since he has become her tutor, and her innocent smiles and caresses make even me half young again, nor do you wish to lose her I think. Could we make up our minds to send her from us, one look, I suspect, would soften our hearts and change our purpose."

"I should not wonder sir, for there is something in her look there is no withstanding. There are many more beautiful eyes in the world, I have no doubt; but hers say so prettily,

‘do love and be kind to me,’ that there is no uttering anything cross to her, let me try ever so much.”

“Just so Mrs. Jelf, and therefore, I see nothing left but keeping her here, and doing our best not to spoil her. With my scanty means even Cecil must work out his own fortune, and so must Amy, should we fail to find out her relations. Since we cannot give her an independance, we must give her a good education, and then procure her a comfortable situation as governess.”

“A comfortable situation as governess!” replied Mrs. Jelf, “that may be not so easy to find. As far as my judgment goes, and I have seen something of this in my life time, an upper servant has better wages, and fewer vexations. A governess is like an unsteady mould of jelly, too good for the servants’ hall, not good enough for the parlour, nobody cares for her, and it is well for her if she cares for nobody. She is like an odd cup and saucer, never suits with the

rest of the set, or like a dove in a flock of jack daws, where every one is for plucking and pulling her to pieces. She might as well be kitchen maid, only it is not counted so genteel, for she is almost as much at every one's beck and call; and then she can only be a governess at last, whereas a kitchen maid may rise to be a housekeeper, and while one sits sulking up in the school room, or on thorns in the parlour, the other is laughing and jesting with those of her own degree. I have felt something of what it is to be between and betwixt, myself."

"There is much truth in your picture Mrs. Jelf, though it is somewhat darkly coloured, but Amy cannot be a kitchen maid, and therefore as I said before, we must do the best for her we can. We must teach her the truth from the beginning, and let her know from the first what she has to expect. To send men and women, or boys and girls either into the world blindfold, is to subject them to the risk of being fooled by all their fellow players in the game of life, to

say nothing of knocking their own heads against posts and doors. The world is neither a paradise nor a purgatory; every station has its blessings; every evil, not of our own creating, its compensations; and those who can discover neither, should blame themselves and not the dispensations of Providence. The world was created a beautiful world! But as man marred its beauty in olden times by disobedience, so does he in the present. As the Poet says, Mrs. Jelf,

"God made the Sunshine, we ourselves make the Shade!"

"Since we cannot give Amy an independence, let us believe that the working one out for herself, will bring into use those higher qualities of heart and mind which might otherwise never be developed, or once developed, corrode from the rust of disuse; and this is no idle fancy believe me, but a truth demonstrated every day."

"But she may turn out very pretty, and

beauty is no recommendation to a governess," suggested Mrs. Jelf. "It brings its perils."

"It does in some instances, leading to vanity, &c." replied the good rector suppressing a smile at the housekeeper's manner, which was that of one who meant to say that she had been pretty in her day, and made conquests if she had not broken hearts. "But beauty has also its blessings, prepossessing the multitude in its favour more than it should sometimes; at any rate the future in form, as well as in fortune rests with One who orders all things better than we can, and to His ordering let us leave it. I think we can muster some little learning among us, and with three such instructors she should turn out a prodigy, not that I mean to say Amy is a genius, but she has a quick, observant mind, and a warm, affectionate heart."

"Yes, that she has, I never met with a more affectionate, grateful temper; but even this may prove a misfortune to her hereafter, caus-

ing her to love some one not good enough for her."

"It may also prove a blessing, Mrs. Jelf, as it has done already, winning her friends when she most needed them. Hitherto her affections have been more developed and exercised than her intellect, and there may be danger in this, standing alone as she does without a natural protector, against which we must guard, teaching her to see and to act as well as to feel. And now to divide our labour of love, for that it will be, I think, to all. You must have the house and household department, including female manners," and an almost imperceptible smile curled the good rector's lip as he thought, Cecil will take care she shall not make her as stiff as herself. "I will do my best to make her a sound thinker and a good christian, which last, to my mind, includes the minor as well as the major virtues; and Cecil shall do the poetical and ideal."

"I don't see any use in her writing poetry,"

observed Mrs. Jelf, who held poets in no good estimation.

"I did not mean that he should teach her to write verses," replied Mr. Alleyne with a smile, "merely that he should teach her those accomplishments which his own natural talent and a residence abroad would have enabled him to acquire. We must not make her a mere stiff, formal piece of philosophy ; believe me the ideal when properly understood beautifies the real, instead of clothing the false in worthless tinsel, or making life stale, dull, and unprofitable. In other words, Cecil shall crown our work with that pure, snow-white frost that looks like fairy handiwork of yours, so that whether our labour turn out a soft, sweet trifle, or a more spiritual tipsy cake, or a mingling of both, it shall be equally appropriate."

"Well, sir, I suppose it must be so since we can do no better."

"Exactly so Mrs. Jelf, we must do all we can and leave the result in higher hands, making

truth and self denial the ground work of our lessons. Banish that anxious look, why anticipate failure when we may just as reasonably anticipate success? why doubt where we should trust? vexing ourselves and shaming a beneficent Creator who gave us not only so fair a world to dwell in, but oh! far higher gift a reconciling Saviour to bring us back into our Father's fold. Some people like to look on black, but for myself I love rose colour best and make useful medicines out of what others consider poisons."

" Ah! well sir, you are quite right, we certainly should be much happier if we hoped instead of doubting, and did not let everything vex us as we do; better take things as they are, than fret because they are not as they should be. Dear me what is that I hear! If there is not Molly scrubbing the green room when I told her not to touch it, I dare say she has not cleaned the windows first, or dusted the curtains. The under servants never do what

they should unless I stand over them all the time. It is nothing but worry, morning, noon and night, to keep things clean and in their places; better be a kitchen maid by half, and then there is only your work to think of, and now I am responsible for everybody. It is enough to drive one mad sometimes! I must go and see what she is about," and away went the zealous housekeeper with an unusually quick pace, leaving the placid rector to smile at her practical assent to the wisdom of taking things as they are, instead of fretting that they are not as they should be.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE arrangements for Amy's education were carried out with more exactness than such arrangements usually are, and all her tutors reported well of her progress, though Mrs. Jelf would occasionally suspect that her skill in making pickles and preserves, sheets, napkins, and tea cloths, might be attributed rather to affection for her, than any real love for such household matters. On such occasions the

zealous, some thought the over zealous house-keeper, would deliver long lectures on the home duties of women in all stations of life, to which Amy would listen with such sweet patience, looking all the while full of grateful submission, that Mrs. Jelf's jealousy for the honor of her profession was not only appeased, but the orphan girl rendered more dear to her heart, and usually rewarded by some fresh indulgence.

"Poor thing! she has neither father or mother, one can't scold her," said Mrs. Jelf to herself; and the only wonder was that in spite of her usual prudence she did not say it to Amy. She could not scold her and no one else but Mrs. Hopkins, a grave look was enough to warn her of error and teach her amendment, while her simple, childish ways, her honest frankness were so endearing, that it required all the good rector's sense of the great responsibility of an education, to induce him to run the risk of bringing the shadow of care on her brow, by placing distinctly before her view, the world

not only as it was to others, but as it might prove to her, from the peculiar position she would hold in society, her friends, her relatives, nay her very birth place unknown. To risk touching the present by revealing what the future might be, nay in some respects must be, caused a struggle in the kind heart of him who had learned to love her as a child; but he felt it a duty and the duty was done, and done so judiciously too that the cloud passed away almost before he could note it, bright hope displacing transient fear. Truth and self-denial were, as he had said they should be, the groundworks of her education, and she learnt from him to love the majesty of truth, however painful at the time, rather than to dread its strictness, and to make cheerful self-denial its own reward. Her submission to God and man had nothing of the servile or hypocritical obedience of the slave, who would rebel if he dared, but was the grateful submission of the loving, trusting heart. It was this feeling which

he had ever strove to implant in Amy and Cecil, and he had the delight of seeing it take root, and grow in their youthful minds, bringing forth fruit as sweet to the taste as it was fair to the glance.

Often would tears of gratitude start into his eyes, as he looked at the two children, gentle, loving, and diligent. The feebleness of Cecil's childhood was rapidly passing away, his body gaining health and strength, his mind more power and fresh energy each hour. He felt no wish for boyish companions, no longing for boyish sports; Castle Coombe was for the present, wide world enough for him, and to win knowledge himself, and impart it to Amy was his greatest delight, so that to debar him from this was always a sufficient punishment. It was such pleasure to teach one so docile, so intelligent, who caught at a half expressed idea, and brightened sober reason, with the play of her quick fancy. Indeed in the matter of learning both needed the curb oftener than the

spur. Neither had been disgusted or stupified by long prosy lessons beyond their comprehension, taught by prosy teachers as a duty ; those who taught them had had their heart in the teaching, and this was the secret of their success.

Some one has said that where children do not learn the teachers should be whipt and not the taught, and there is more wisdom in the saying than many at the first idea may be inclined to admit ; there are some born geese, no doubt, but there are many more made geese ; and some learned professors and masters of arts, whom the world considers rich in ancient or modern lore, may deserve the fool's cap more than their pupils, for undertaking that for which they have no talent. The good tutor must not only know himself, but he must also know how to make this knowledge agreeable to others, he must not only love teaching, but also those whom he teaches ; and love makes all things easy.

Days, weeks, nay months, and years, passed on in the same calm and happy routine, Cecil and Amy were always together, for some hours in each day at least, now poring over the same book, now joining their voices in the same song, now bounding across the park, agile and graceful, as young fawns, reclining on some mossy bank, or seeking the earliest flowers of the young spring, the wild wood sorrel, or the star-like anemone, and twining these with the blue bell and primrose, deck out Mr. Alleyne's favourite nook in the library, or his little study in the parsonage. In nothing were they more in union than in their love and reverence for him. Or if there were any flowers to spare, Cecil twined them amidst the flowing tresses of his young companion.

And how went on the rest of the little world at Castle Coombe? To tell the honest truth, it did not appear to go at all, or if it did, the movement was so very slow, that many did not perceive it, but thought the village was

coming to a standstill. The baker's wife was as actively kind as ever, her husband as passively, while Jem, their son, retaining his boyish admiration for Amy, would often bring her flowers, delighted if he could present her with the first violet of the year. The greatest change was the departure of the Hopkinses and Mrs. Bates, and the different estimation in which Amy was held since her adoption, as it was termed, by the good rector. Oh! what a blessing had that proved for her. Mrs. Fitzallan was again the poor, sweet lady! and her daughter a dear, sweet child! Young, as Amy was, she had penetration enough to see the change which first puzzled, and then pained her. Mr. Alleyne noticed this, and without encouraging bitterness towards the servile and worldly, taught her how to draw from it a good lesson for the future, how to keep on the straightforward path in steadfastness and truth, through evil and through good report, and to act less according

to the world's standard than that implanted by God in her own heart.

It was a bright summer morning, about this time, that the quiet village was disturbed by the very unusual appearance of an elegant travelling carriage with out-riders, wearing dark, rich liveries: and its progress traced with great curiosity, until it finally drew up at the door of the Castle Coombe Arms, where the delighted landlady making her appearance in an incredibly short space of time, taking into consideration the metamorphosis she had paused to make in her attire, prepared to receive her guest with the very blindest of smiles, and smartest of caps. For once however all the fine speeches of Mrs. Hodgson, and she could make herself very agreeable when she chose, or thought to get anything by it, were entirely thrown away.

The traveller, who might have been a lord as she said, for the airs he gave himself (Mrs. Hodgson's idea of a lord,) alighted in silence,

without deigning to take the least notice of her somewhat overstrained civilities; and ordering an early dinner went to take a stroll in the village until it was prepared.

“I think I can venture to promise that your lordship will find it well worth seeing,” said the loquacious landlady, nothing daunted by the repelling haughtiness of his look and manner.—“The old Castle especially, which some of the gentry come for miles round to look at. Not that many of them are admitted beyond the grounds, for Mrs. Jelf, the housekeeper, an intimate friend of my own, (a fib bye the bye,) is very particular, although I have no doubt she would be happy to show it to your lordship. And if your lordship likes I will send up one of the waiters immediately and ask.—What name shall I say?” added the landlady, taking silence for consent, and adroitly availing herself of this opportunity to gain some clue as to the real rank and position of her guest.

“It is of no consequence,” replied the

stranger coldly, "as I have no intention of visiting Castle Coombe at present."

"At present," repeated Mrs. Hodgson to herself as she unwillingly retired, "who knows but he may be going to remain here for some little time at least—I do think," she added, "that there is Mrs. Brown, of the Black Horse, standing over the way with her mouth open wide enough to swallow the carriage altogether. Poor thing! how mortified she must feel?" and full of compassionate triumph, and nervous anxiety with regard to the dinner, the stately landlady, passed through the group of servants with becoming dignity, and sought her own apartment; not forgetting to order Tom Mitchener, the head waiter, who on account of his well known shrewdness stood high in his mistress's confidence, to be sure and fish out all he could.

The stranger meanwhile pursued his solitary walk, carefully avoiding the principal streets, and never thinking to notice the simple and

timid courtesies of the village children even by a smile; perhaps he saw them not, for his thoughts seemed utterly absorbed, and his brow stern and contracted. There was no sympathy in the cold, keen eyes which wandered around without resting on a single spot, and evidently without a perception of the calm, peaceful loveliness of the scenes through which he passed: for vain, unless the heart be right within, is all outward beauty.

On the same bright morning Amy and Cecil sat together in the quiet parlour at the Rectory, with their books resting on the low window sill, and the fresh wind stirring their long hair, and fanning their young cheeks. While Mr. Alleyne, a little apart, also strove to read, but was continually interrupted by the comments and enquiries of his more restless companions. A rude wooden bench, where the good rector liked to sit in the summer time, and which loving hands, early as it was, had already festooned with many a flower, and

creeping plant, was placed below the casement, concealed from the view of those within by green and clustering shrubs.

"A penny for your thoughts, Cecil!" said Amy, playfully drawing away the book upon which his dreamy glance had long since ceased to rest, "for I am sure they were not here."

"No, for I was thinking of you."

"You always are dear Cecil!" replied the girl with a grateful look.

"How can I help it, Amy?"

"But your present sage reflections, let us have them. Were you wondering how much longer I meant to sit and ponder over these verbs?"

"No I was not thinking of the verbs, but recalling to mind what my grandpapa said yesterday in his sermon, about everything always turning out for the best."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"A great deal; for then I could not help reflecting, how if your grandfather had claimed

you, or any answer been returned to the advertisements inserted by Mr. Wolley, with the view of finding out your lost relatives, I might never have known and loved you, and we should certainly never have been so happy as we are now."

"But is not this a somewhat selfish mode of reasoning my Cecil?" asked Mr. Alleyne, looking up from the volume before him. "For Amy would in that case have had a home of her own, and no doubt have soon learned to love this unknown grandfather as well or better than she does us."

"Oh! never! never," exclaimed the child with vehemence, "when he was so cruel to poor mamma! Her white, sorrowful, face, would be continually rising up to prevent it, and to make me hate and fear him; for Betty Harper said that she was quite sure he killed her by that letter, she had seemed so well only a few moments before. But hark! what was that?"

"Only the little birds overhead Amy, startled away by your passionate tone," said Mr. Alleyne, rebukingly.

"Forgive me—Oh ! pray, forgive me !" pleaded the penitent girl. "But do not let us talk again of him. Have I not a dear, kind grandpapa as it is, with a beautiful home, and a beloved brother into the bargain ?"

"But your real grandfather may have been very rich," mused Mr. Alleyne aloud, as he submitted to her gentle caresses.

"What then ?" said Cecil, "we are rich enough for happiness as it is—are we not ?"

"Yes, certainly, but hereafter both you and Amy will have to earn your own living."

"Cannot I work for both, sir ?" asked Cecil. "Somehow I cannot fancy it a hardship to toil for those we love !"

"Time enough to talk of all this, my dear boy !" said the good rector, with glistening eyes, "but you must get stronger first."

"I should like to be rich too," exclaimed Amy thoughtfully, after a long pause. "As rich as—let me see—as rich as the Countess of Castle Coombe!"

"And what would you do then Amy?"

"Oh! first of all Cecil should be Earl."

"How often we should astonish Mrs. Jelf," said the laughing boy.

"Ah! good, kind Mrs. Jelf! she should never have anything more to do, but walk and scold just as much as she liked. And then I would not forget Mrs. Marsh either. And dear grandpapa should have every new book and print as fast as they came out, and heaps of money to distribute to the poor, and that would make you happy, would it not?"

Mr. Alleyne smiled, and patted her upturned cheek.

"But you have forgotten me," said Cecil.

"Oh! no indeed, last but not least you know. You should not have even to wish for any thing, if I could help it; and I would do

nothing all day long but sit, and talk, and sing to you, or be very quiet if you wanted to study. And then we would travel together all over those sunny lands of which you have so often told me. And there is one thing more," added Amy with a sudden thoughtfulness, "which I would do were I Countess of Castle Coombe; put a beautiful monument all of white marble over dear mamma, and get Mr. Alleyne to write the epitaph, that all might know how good she was."

"And yet," said the rector, "I doubt whether your fine monument would afford you half the pleasure that you now have in going to scatter flowers upon that simple grave; and it could not possibly benefit her whose spirit has burst its earthly tabernacle and rests with God!"

"Perhaps," said Amy, after a pause, "you doubt whether all that I have planned would make us the happier? And I question it too; oh! we cannot be happier than we are now!"

Cecil was right in saying that it was all for the best that my stern and cruel grandfather never found out and came to claim me, or he might have broken my heart as he did poor Mamma's."

"Amy!—Amy!" exclaimed the good rector reproachfully.

At that moment there was a slight rustling sound beneath the casement, and the stranger moving off the low bench upon which he had most likely sat down to rest, walked slowly away in the direction of the village.

"He must have heard every word we have been saying," whispered Amy.

"Nay, he may not have been there above a few moments," observed Cecil.

Once the stranger paused and looked up towards the casement, while Amy involuntarily shuddered, placing her hand in that of her companion as if for protection. And the recollection of that pale, wrathful face and those gleaming eyes, haunted her for months afterwards with a fearful distinctness.

Mrs. Hodgson was somewhat put out of the way by the return of her guest some hours sooner than she had expected, before the dinner was half ready, or the silver which she had rummaged out of a certain strong box, (the contents of which no one knew but herself, not even Mr. Hodgson and which had become somewhat time stained for want of use, it not happening very often of late days that she found a customer for whom it was worth while making such a display as was meditated on the present occasion,) begun to be cleaned. In less space however than it took the disappointed landlady to recover from her astonishment, the carriage was ordered round, the untasted dinner handsomely paid for, and the two tall footmen springing up behind, away went her haughty guest as suddenly and mysteriously as he had come, and without her curiosity being gratified in the least particular; for the servants, it seemed, in spite of all Tom Mitchener's tact

and cunning, had turned out as proud and laconic as their master, one of the out-riders simply observing, in answer to a question that pressed somewhat closely, that if his master was not a lord himself, he was rich enough to buy up half a dozen such !

“In my opinion,” said good Mrs. Marsh, laying her hand on her husband’s shoulder as they stood at the shop door, looking after the travelling carriage, which had caused such a sensation in the village. “In my opinion you and I are just as happy, if not a great deal happier than he who has just rolled past us, for all his fine turn out. Did you notice how pale and stern he looked, with his eyes gleaming like two live coals ?”

“I dare say you are right,” said her husband with his usual passive good nature, “and after all it is something to have a contented spirit, mind that Jem !” turning to his son as he spoke, who assented somewhat less readily, for his

senses were still dazzled by the recollection of the stranger's splendid equipage, and high-blooded steeds.

But the good baker was right, a contented spirit is a blessing.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE than five years had passed in the same happy calm, and Amy was only the more beloved by her three kind instructors, between whom no jealousy had yet arisen, though the elder ones saw, or fancied they saw, that the lessons of her youngest tutor were the most agreeable, as well as the most effective.

“Is that you Cecil, panting and puffing like a turtle shall I say?” asked Amy, as she felt

that he was bending over her, while she was engaged in painting in a sky to one of her sketches, an occupation which prevented her turning round.

"Don't call me a turtle, Amy, that is a cold blooded animal, a creature that has no higher ambition than to crawl on a sandy beach, lay a few eggs and then sink into the sea again."

"Don't be scandalous Cecil. Who knows but this same abused turtle, may entertain the exalted ambition of delighting the gourmands at a Lord Mayor's feast ! an ambition I suspect as much beyond your hopes, as it certainly is beyond your ability to accomplish."

"Most probably. I have no time to punish your impertinence now, but you shall not escape me hereafter. I have just run up to tell you that Doctor Dodsworth, my grandfather's old college friend, having arrived last night, I must do the cicerone to him, instead of teaching or walking with you. Are you sorry at this? I am."

"Then I must be sorry too according to Mrs. Jelf, for she persists in saying that whatever you feel I feel, and whatever you do I do, so please not to cut off your head, for I cannot but think that would hurt very much."

"Amy, you are in one of your tormenting moods. See that I do not cut off your head instead of my own. Say you are sorry, or take the consequences,"—and he unsheathed an antique sword, the property of some former lord of Coombe Castle.

"Would it be very heroic to resist to the death?" asked Amy archly.

"It would be much safer to submit, for I am by no means, as cold blooded as the turtle to which you likened me."

"So I perceive, and therefore submit at your counsel. I am very sorry, for the sun never shines half so brightly when you are not beside me, and my heart is not in jellies and preserves, dusters and tea-cloths, though I always endeavour to do Mrs. Jelf's bidding as well as I can,

that she may not perceive my distaste for household, or useful employments, as she calls them."

"She suspects your heresy nevertheless, and occasionally moans over your delinquency."

"I fear she does, though to pay all I owe her I strive to seem all she wishes, but I am not made out of housekeeper's clay; not but I could keep my brother's house to perfection," she added archly.

"I will do my best to win one and put you to the trial," was Cecil's reply, and if his tone had less of archness, it had more energy and earnestness.

"Shall you be out ciceroning all day? I don't see why I should not coin words as well as others, there is no law against that."

"Save the law of sense."

"And would you, unciyl as you are, intimate that I could ever break the laws of sense?"

"I would vouch for your being skilled in the laws of nonsense."

"Fie on your rudeness! get you gone!"

said Amy gaily, then catching a glimpse of his half averted face, her manner changed in an instant to one of deep and affectionate feeling. "You are vexed dear Cecil! not with my nonsense I hope?"

"No, no, Amy, not vexed, only I wish you felt as sorry as I do that we shall be parted all day."

"And so I do dear Cecil! quite as sorry; but it is right you should go with your grandfather's old friend, and it is better to do a duty with a smiling face than a dull one." And the young maiden glanced archly into his countenance to see how he bore her gentle homily.

"So it is Amy, a dull horse never wins the race, and I am ashamed of having been out of humour. As a penance I will try not to think of you while out riding, but do my best to entertain the learned doctor.

"That is like you 'Cecil, now I know you again, and as a reward I would say over and over again I am very, very sorry! only that

would be wasting your time and doing no good. Better be careful of a new dish than mourn over a broken one, as I heard dear, kind Mrs. Jelf say this very morning, which sublime proverb I translate thus, better remedy a misfortune than cry over it. Must you, as I asked before, be ciceroning Doctor Dodsworth all day. Can you not run up in the evening, I want you to praise my singing, correct my drawing, and do a thousand things beside."

"No Amy, instead of my running up to you, you must run down to me. My grandfather wants you to dine at the rectory, and if you should be setting off from hence a little after four, who knows but we may find it the nearest way home from our ride, and honor you with our company."

"I thank you for the high honor!" replied Amy with mock humility.

"A lovely walk we will have home by moonlight Amy."

"A lovely walk by moonlight indeed, with the

slimy snails crushing beneath our feet, and the bats, and the beetles flying right in our eyes!"

"What unpoetical ideas Amy. You shall have double lessons for this to-morrow."

"I shall not have time to learn them, Mrs. Jelf requires my presence at the pickling tub," answered Amy, with a look of merry mischief.

"We shall see," replied Cecil as he closed the door.

The light-hearted girl sat for some moments silent and still, listening, it seemed, to his departing steps, then snatching some flowers from a vase before her, she sprang to an open window and showered them down on Cecil's head as he passed beneath.

Her silvery laugh rang sweetly on his ear; there stood Amy herself looking down upon him with her dimpling smile, and soft yet brilliant eyes.

"You shall pay for this!" cried Cecil, holding up his finger in playful threatening.

"To Cecil's heart!" was Amy's merry rejoinder, flinging down a rose, which the young man caught, and after pressing to his lips with a gallantry half jesting, half in earnest, was placed in the position which she had playfully assigned it. And there it lay in after years when nothing but memory and those withered flowers remained to whisper of what had been.

The laughing girl kissed her hand in return, and continued to look from the window even after Cecil was out of sight, and ever as she looked the expression of her features grew more thoughtful. The future came with its wreathing mist, veiling the brightness of the present.

"In my young days, ladies never thought of throwing down flowers on gentlemen's heads, but the times are altered now and the fashions too. They tell me that a good, honest round of beef is no longer to be seen at a nobleman's

table. I wonder what the world will come to next."

Amy turned round abruptly, startled from her reverie by the solemn tone of the speaker. There stood the housekeeper upright and stiff, with an unmade pillowcase in her hand, and a reproving look on her sober features.

"It was only Cecil, my brother," said Amy, colouring slightly, and smiling too at her flinging down flowers, and the banishment of the round of beef having been coupled together in the zealous housekeeper's picture of the degeneracy of the times.

"Don't be vexed with me dear Jelfy! I was only idle two minutes and a quarter!" she added, flinging her arms round the neck of the stately spinster, and kissing her thin, sallow cheek.

Who could have foreseen that the overcleanly and formal housekeeper of the Earl of Castle Coombe, would have ever submitted to

be kissed, hugged, and called Jelfy, by the little dirty, uncombed beggar girl, whose ragged frock and unwashed face had excited as much disgust as pity? Who shall tell what the future may bring forth? Who shall limit the power of affection? Love is a mightier potentate than fear, and works more wonders in his gentle way, than terror with his iron rule. Yes, love is power. I mean not the silly fancy of a silly boy and girl; but love, pure, high-souled, unselfish love! whether the object of it be man, woman, or child—the love that thinketh no evil, but worketh all good.

For a moment the stately housekeeper seemed doubtful whether she should not expand her remark into a warning lecture, but it was only a moment; there was no steeling her heart against the fascination of her pupil's grateful caress, and almost unconsciously the caress was returned with only a half murmured "ah! we all spoil you."

"I will try to be very good and not disgrace your spoiling," replied the grateful girl, with another kiss. "I can never forget what I owe you all."

"Here I am Amy, true to my promise," said Cecil, meeting her at the door as she left the Castle to proceed to the Rectory, springing from his horse as he spoke, and flinging the bridle to Jem Marsh, who had just come up to the Castle on a message from his mother.

Jem took the bridle, and understanding the accompanying look, rode off to the Rectory stable.

"How will you reward me?" continued Cecil.

"By saying I have been dull, very dull without you."

"I am glad you missed me."

"Is not that selfish?"

"It is a selfishness I can neither repent nor amend, if it is."

"Oh ! fie ; but tell me did you play cicerone well ?"

"You may ask Doctor Dodsworth, for I suppose we must include him in my party, as he does not seem inclined to ride on."

"Eh, what is it ?" said the good natured Doctor, verifying Cecil's words by quietly dismounting, and walking on by the side of the young people ; nodding to Amy, as he spoke, with a kindness which set her at ease at once. Some few persons have the happy knack of doing this.

"Only Amy, with her usual sauciness, dares to question my capabilities of playing both guide and cicerone to perfection," replied Cecil.

"For which I cannot do less than vouch, in return for a day so kindly devoted to my amusement," said Dodsworth.

"And did he really never once forget himself in a fit of poetical musing, recovering only

on the wrong side of a five-barred gate, which required to be leapt over if he would not submit to retrace his steps some half dozen miles, or called a partridge, a dove—a sparrow, a nightingale—or Ned the cow-boy, a gentle shepherd?”

“Not that I remember,” replied the Doctor, with a laughing and inquisitive glance at his animated interrogator.

“Now it would have served you right if I had gone home some other way, and left you to walk over to the Rectory by yourself, Miss Saucebox!”

“And who would have been the sufferer had you done so?” asked Amy, shaking back her bright curls with an air of conscious triumph.

“Oh! then it was an assignation, was it?” said the Doctor. “I wondered what made Cecil look at his watch so repeatedly within the last hour. But we have kept very

good time, have we not Miss Fitz-allan?"

Cecil looked confused, but Amy only laughed, and spoke of some odd minutes which she had waited for the very last time.

"Indeed I am not sure that I should have stayed now, but the clouds looked so beautiful, sweeping along over the calm blue sky, that I could not resist standing still to watch them."

An apt and maidenly excuse, thought the Doctor.

"And so you, too, are somewhat given to these same poetical musings of which you just now accused our young friend?" said he; "gazing at the blue sky, and shaping out, perhaps, a thousand wild images in the flitting clouds."

"Oh! yes, I often do that," said Amy simply, "but then, they pass away so soon!"

Doctor Dodsworth sighed involuntarily.

"It is always thus," said he, unconscious

that he spoke in a grave and saddened tone.

“ Oh ! no, not always I hope—nay, I am sure that there are some things which will never pass away, my love and gratitude for instance to Mr. Alleyne, and dear, good Mrs. Jelf!—and you last but not least as usual, Cecil.” And she placed her little hand in that of her companion, with earnest and affectionate warmth. “ It is only vain, idle dreams of the imagination which flit by us so rapidly.”

“ And so you have had a very happy day Cecil ?” continued the girl archly, following the humour of her wild and changeful mood.

Her companion glanced reproachfully into her merry face, but was of course necessitated to answer in the affirmative.

“ So have I too, I have not missed you much, only when my pens wanted mending—or my flowers watering—and those long, endless seams which I can get through so quickly when you read to me, appeared as though they

would never be finished—or my drawing would not come right—and my guitar wanted a fresh string—and when Mrs. Jelf scolded me for wasting those pretty roses upon you this morning, and there was no one to take my part.”

“Only half a dozen times, Amy,” said Cecil laughing, his good humour completely restored, and his pride soothed by the admission.

“I fear you must hate me for detaining Cecil from you for so long,” observed the Doctor.

“Oh! no, thank you rather—Thank you very much for the unusual luxury of a quiet day. And I hope you mean to stay some time, and take him out with you very often.”

There was a mingling of playful humour, and genuine politeness in Amy’s manner, which both pleased and puzzled her observant companion. And all reached the Rectory in time for dinner, and in high good humour with themselves and each other. A state of mind

far less difficult of attainment than is generally imagined, so we can once understand and resolutely endeavour to pursue the right way to set about it.

CHAPTER X.

"WHAT do you intend to do with your grandson?" asked the Doctor, as he and Mr. Alleyne sat together in the little drawing room at the rectory, the windows of which looked out on the lawn, where Cecil and Amy were strolling, enjoying the cool of a lovely summer's evening.

"I suppose when strong enough he must go

to some school, or tutor, he has been delicate from his birth."

"Strong enough Alleyne! Do look at his clear complexion, and active, well formed limbs. He may not be troubled with over much flesh, but I never saw any one more agile in movement, or seemingly more able to endure fatigue. He walked half the time we were out to-day, to save the keeper's horse. Look at him now springing up like a vaulter to get that rose for his fair companion. He has not only a healthy body but also a healthy mind."

"You think so do you Dodsworth? I am glad to hear it," and the grandfather's eye, sparkled brightly at the praises bestowed on his daughter's child. "The truth is," he continued with a placid smile, "one day here is so much like another that I forget the lapse of time, and fancy Cecil is still but a delicate boy."

"That is not the whole truth Alleyne, you will not see how strong and manly he is grown,

lest you should feel yourself compelled to send him from you."

"It may be so Dodsworth, for who shall discover all the secret springs of the human heart? I shall feel lonely indeed when he is gone, but I suppose he must quit me soon, he is growing a great boy now."

"A great boy. Umph! about five feet ten, a great boy indeed, and not far from eighteen, I think he said."

"He is seventeen," observed Mr. Alleyne.

"Seventeen if you like. And now what are you going to do with him?"

"My scanty means must limit my wishes, but I would if I could, send him to some tutor previous to entering him at the University. Tutors however are expensive."

"They are, and why send him?"

"Why the fact is Dodsworth, what with my poverty, and perhaps more, my affection, he has had no instructor but me."

“He could not have had a better. He could pass his ‘little go’ at once, I could stake my reputation on that, and having been an examining master more than once in my time, my word as to this may be taken.”

“Do you really think so? I feared lest my affection should rate his acquirements too highly.”

“We talked much to-day, and I have no hesitation in saying, that few young men take so large a stock of learning to either University. If diligent he would be certain of obtaining honors.”

“No fear of his diligence, I have always had to keep him back, not urge him on.”

“Then send him to Oxford at once, you look doubtful, and yet you are not one to let your affection injure its object; he must leave Castle Coombe some time or other.”

“He must however much I may miss him, but it is not the thought of parting which makes

me doubtful, it is the danger of sending a mere boy from the utter seclusion of Castle Coombe, into the world without a guide beside him. There is always danger in sudden transitions, and for this reason I wished to find him some intermediate position, where he might mix with those of his own age. Perhaps I should have procured him companions here, but the scattered neighbourhood, my scanty means, and possibly my own hermit habits, prevented my giving him the society suited to his years."

"There may be some truth in this, and yet if I read him correctly, he is no grandfather's spoiled pet, thinking that he has but to open his mouth, and nectarines will fall into it, but a clever, high-minded youth, brought up to work his own way in the world, and conquer difficulties, instead of yielding to them."

"So I have sought to bring him up."

"And you have succeeded Alleyne; he is neither a mere idle dreamer, nor a mechanical

machine. But one with thought to desire and energy to execute; having his own high standard of what man should be, yet willing to make the best of men and the world as they are. The truth, that no good is to be obtained without some labour, seems strongly impressed on his mind, and he admits that the glory of a high endeavour, must be considered its own reward, I say admits, for I doubt if he feels this fully; with the natural presumption of clever youth, he thinks all obstacles can be overcome by self denial and perseverance, and no very unwise principle for youth to start with. But here am I delivering a lecture instead of making a proposition. To be brief, I have taken a fancy to the young man, let him enter my college at once, he will do it credit. As its head I may be able to show him much kindness, though of course no partiality."

"Thank you Dodsworth for the offer, and the interest you take in my boy; but most

of the under-graduates at your college are young men of large fortune; I can allow Cecil but little, and the contrast would increase his trial. Am I justified in doing this?"

"There is truth in what you say, but I am much mistaken if his good sense, good temper, and steady principles will not enable him to overcome all difficulties, though not without some annoyance, and the getting into some scrapes; for I do not mean to say that your grandson is perfect."

"He is a little over quick and impetuous at times," said Mr. Alleyne, and unconsciously he said it in an excusing tone.

"Suppose we lay all before him and let him decide for himself, such is the way you have brought him up I think?"

"It is, let it be as you say."

"There's one thing more, Alleyne, and you must not deny me this. His mother was my godchild, and many a time has she sat on my

knee; you must let me consider him my god-child too, and share in the expense of his education. I know that your living is but small, and that you consider it a minister's duty to spend most of that which comes from the parish on his parishioners, instead of amassing large fortunes for his children; now I am comparatively rich, without wife or parish, so you must not say nay to me in this. You lent me money in my younger days when few would have trusted me, so must not refuse my aid to your grandson. Not a word on the subject.—Now comes the question of Cecil's profession, the same as your own I conclude?"

"No, I am sorry to say he wishes a more stirring life, and I would press no one to enter the church. The desire for the sacred office of a minister should be ardent and spontaneous, not a matter of persuasion, or what is more, pounds, shillings, and pence. It would have been a pleasure to think that I should have him

as my successor, and the Earl half promised this, but it is not to be, and I would not distress Cecil by shewing my regret at his choice. He has resolved on being a barrister."

"A barrister. Have you any interest that way?"

"A cousin of his father's being a solicitor, may help him to a brief, and that is all."

"An unwise choice, it seems. I might assist him in the church, having a cousin among the newly appointed Bishops; but you do not like to use persuasion on this subject?"

"No, he must choose for himself. It is my belief that much of the unhappiness, and perhaps, much of the sin in the world proceeds from persons being misplaced, thrown into positions or forced into pursuits opposed to their wishes, their talents, or their tastes."

"I agree with you, so your grandson must have his way, and do the best he can. But hush! who is that singing?"

"Amy," replied Mr. Alleyne, moving nearer

the window that he might hear more distinctly.
“ I love to hear her sing, it soothes and cheers
me. Let us listen !”—

AMY'S SONG.

Hope comes with the Spring time,
And joy with the flowers !
Though the skies may be weeping
With April's soft showers.
They but herald the sunshine
Which more brightly appears,
From the clouds that had threatened
To give us but tears !

Men believe not that sorrow
Can never depart,
When once it has withered
The joys of our heart.
For hope soars above us
On bright rainbow wing,
Where she points to the regions
Of undying Spring !

“ The blackbird's song is less wild and glad
to my ears ;” observed Mr. Alleyne as the last
note died away.

“ Her singing is sweet and joyous like her

fair, young face ; those are the proper terms," replied his friend. " And what a lovely picture, as she sits beneath that clustering rose-bush, now bending over her guitar, now glancing up with a rosy smile at the youth beside her. It makes me, old, bachelor, fellow, as I am, quite romantic, and I long to be poet or painter to do her justice. Who is she ?"

" Amy Fitzallan, the poor, deserted orphan, about whom I wrote to you some years back, thinking you might be able to give me some information concerning her family, after whom all enquiries have hitherto been made in vain !"

" What ! the little dirty, half starved beggar, transformed into the tall, graceful, accomplished girl ?"

" Exactly so ;" and the good rector smiled at his old friend's look of surprise.

" So no one has claimed her, and she is left a burden on your scanty means ?"

" We rather consider her a legacy be-

queathed to our affection, and no one grudges the legacy duty I can tell you."

"We, whom do you mean by we?"

"Mrs. Jelf, the housekeeper at Coombe Castle, Cecil, and myself; and I suppose I should include Mrs. Marsh, the baker's wife, who considers herself one of Amy's self appointed guardians. To have her taken from us now, would seem a wrong, and would certainly be a sorrow to each and all of us."

"A goodly board of guardians truly!" observed Doctor Dodsworth laughing. "The expense and trouble, I conclude, fall all upon you."

"No such thing, I believe I have less of either than her other guardians, though no one thinks anything connected with her welfare a trouble. The baker's wife keeps her supplied with new bread and plum cakes, Mrs. Jelf gives her lodging and board when she is not with me; and as for her clothes I scarcely know how she gets them, as I can never get

her to bring me in a bill for the same. She tells of a hoard of things by her, but I very much doubt the tale."

"As funny a joint stock company as ever I heard of, and as profitable as most of the joint stock companies. But who does the teaching part?"

"Oh! that too is a joint concern."

"Impossible! So well read, so highly accomplished, such a capital linguist, and what pleases me most, such a quick intelligence, and habit of thought. She could not have learnt these from a baker's wife, and a housekeeper."

"Nature gave her the quick intelligence, I claim some of the credit of teaching her to think and observe, and as for the accomplishments she owes them to Cecil, who showed remarkable quickness in picking up every language that is spoken before him."

"He must have remarkable quickness in teaching languages as well as in acquiring them."

"His whole heart is in whatever he undertakes, and that I maintain is the great secret of success. Just come from abroad, he spoke other languages as readily, if not more so, than his own, and Amy caught them without much trouble, from hearing him."

"Who taught her singing and dancing?"

"Cecil principally, as a reward for attention to graver studies. Too delicate in his early childhood to engage in rough sports, his father was glad to cultivate a taste for quiet home amusements."

"And who formed her manners? so natural, gay, and graceful."

"Mrs. Jelf claims the merit of forming those."

"I must see this Mrs. Jelf, she must be a wonderful woman."

"Oh certainly! you must not leave the neighbourhood without paying a visit to the Castle, and taking a lesson in manners from Mrs. Jelf." replied the rector, with a comic smile,

which the learned doctor could not comprehend until the morrow.

"This Amy seems a very fascinating creature," observed Doctor Dodsworth, looking keenly into his old friend's face.

"She is, and we all love her dearly."

"Is Alleyne in his dotage that he does not see what this will come to?" thought the Doctor, "I had better give him a hint."

"That Cecil loves her dearly there can be little doubt," observed Dodsworth pointedly.

"No doubt rather ; he has loved her as a sister from the first day he saw her," replied Mr. Alleyne simply.

"Sister !" repeated Dodsworth sharply, a little fidgetted by his old friend's fancied blindness. "He will be playing the lover instead of the brother, shortly, or I am much mistaken."

"Time enough for that, she is only fourteen yet, and he must win enough to support a wife before he can take one."

"And when he shall have won this fortune—then?"

“He shall have Amy, with my blessing if he can win her love. There is no one whom I would more gladly receive as his wife ; she has long been to me as a daughter.”

Some worldly maxims arose to the tongue of Dodsworth, but he looked on the holy calm expressed on his old friend's brow, and they were never uttered.

What was the wealth of the world to this heavenly peace ?

“How will the young folks bear the parting when Cecil shall go forth into the world ?” asked Dodsworth, following the directions of Mr. Alleyne's eye which rested with fond affection on the youthful pair.

“It will be a heavy trial to us all ; but both understand that they have to make their own way in the world, and each will I trust encourage and support the other.”

“Where are they going with those flowers, looking so thoughtful, if not sad ?”

"To Mrs. Fitzallan's grave ; there are few days that they do not pay it a visit."

"That girl has made me a coward Alleyne, do not tell her I have any hand in sending Cecil to Oxford, till after my departure. She will hate me if you do, and I am not sure I could withstand tears in those pleading eyes ; and yet it is for his good."

"It is, Dodsworth, and the young people will thank you for your kindness as I do now, after the first painful surprise has past."

CHAPTER XI.

"SHAMMING sleep," thought Amy, advancing on tiptoe up the gallery to where Cecil sat, with his arms folded on a table before him, and his face bowed down upon them. She stood close beside him, but he appeared unconscious of her presence. She paused a moment, an arch smile dimpling the fair, rounded cheek, a look of mirthful mischief glancing from her deep brown eyes, then raising her arm she

showered over him the sheets of silver paper which Mrs. Jelf had just entrusted to her hands for some housekeeping purpose, standing ready to spring aside should he start up on a sudden and attempt to seize her.

The youth looked up, but it was slowly and sadly, there was neither mirth, nor mischief, nor anger in his glance. The bright smile passed from the young girl's lip, and the dimple from her rosy cheek, and sinking on her knees on a footstool before him she gazed anxiously into his face as she questioned him eagerly—

"Are you ill, dear Cecil? How pale and sad you look."

"No, well, quite well," he replied, with the hurry of one ashamed of the weakness he had not the power to control; but Amy did not understand the feeling, and her affection suggested a thousand evils.

"Then it must be Mr. Alleyne; Cecil, he is very ill—Let me go to him directly!"

"No, no, dear Amy! no one is ill. I shall

never forgive myself for having so frightened you."

"You cannot deceive me, dear Cecil! There is something the matter and I must know all."

"That all is soon told; I leave you in a few weeks, perhaps a few days. I thought myself a hero till I heard your step, and then I knew myself a very coward."

"Leave me!" repeated Amy, her young cheek growing as pale as his. "Where are you going, tell me quickly?"

"To Oxford, and then to London. It may be years before we can again resume our daily and hourly intercourse."

"To Oxford; I feared it was further off," and Amy breathed more freely.

"Is not that far enough?"

"Too far dear Cecil! yet welcome, as nearer than I feared from your words. You have long known this must be, and there will be long vacations, and we can hear from each other very often."

Cecil seemed little consoled by her words, but Mrs. Jelf appeared before he could answer.

"What is the meaning of this, Miss Fitzallan?" began the astounded housekeeper, looking as if she had just swallowed three pokers instead of one, her usual allowance. It was always Miss Fitzallan when she spoke to her in rebuke, or of her in respect. "Is this the way the nice silver paper I gave you is tossed about? and you kneeling before a young gentleman, and looking up into his face as if you were reading a book. Such improprieties were unknown in my young days, and I did not expect this from you who have been under my care so long."

"Do not be vexed with me dear Mrs. Jelf!" Amy was too sad to call her Jelfy, and jest away her reproofs. "Cecil is going away and he looked so ill I could think of nothing else."

"I dare say not, poor child! But where is he going to?"

"To Oxford."

“ Oh ! that is where he was always to go, only I never thought Mr. Alleyne could make up his mind to part with him. It is fitting you should go, and come back such a learned man as the Oxford gentleman you brought here the other day, who could read the odd scratches on the stone that came from Egypt, as glibly as I can a cookery book. I honor learning in a man. To be sure it will be very sad for you two to be separated who have always been together so long ; but there, don't fret about it, dear children. Never mind about the paper Amy ; I can pick up that, only don't cry and vex yourself. You had better go down to the Rectory to dinner, for poor Mr. Alleyne will want some one to console him ; and I will just send him down the roasting-pig that farmer Swain sent a present to me this morning, and I will make a little of your favourite cream and send over afterwards. Oh, about your linen, Master Cecil, I think I had better step down this evening and look it over,

for it has never seemed to me so well kept since Susan married. Amy and I can soon set it to rights, and it would be a shame for him to go to Oxford without a good stock of linen. What would the young men there all say? And now I think of it I will just send down a pot or two of raspberry jam, you both like that, and a little preserved ginger for poor Mr. Alleyne. I can pack a little box of preserves for you to take with you, Master Cecil, and some pickles and a few other things. It will be very lonely for you there at first, among strangers, and there will be nobody then to think of getting nice things for you. But there, don't fret about it, you will come back as learned as Doctor Dodsworth, I should not wonder!"

Without waiting to be thanked, Mrs. Jelf departed, anxious to hide the tears that in spite of herself would come into her eyes. To be seen weeping because a youth of seventeen was going to Oxford, she considered would be be-

neath her dignity. What strange ideas of dignity some people have.

"Dear, kind Mrs. Jelf!" said Amy in grateful tones, though unable to help smiling amid all her sorrow, at the good woman's professional ideas of consolation. "She thinks a roasting pig, a favourite cream, and raspberry jam can remove all troubles."

"She does not understand how much we shall feel at parting," observed Cecil a little pettishly.

"She feels more than you think, dear Cecil! I saw tears in her eyes, though she tried to hide them."

There were tears in her eyes, and what is more, there was sorrow in her heart, and confusion in her mind. Such fearful mistakes among the preserves that day, gooseberry jam, labelled, black currant, and horror of horrors, the raspberry labelled, "Cecil!"

"Let us go into the woods," said Cecil, and thither they went with heavy steps and heavy

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hearts. There was silence between them for a time, and then Cecil spoke abruptly.

"You care little for my leaving you, Amy!"

"Oh! Cecil, how can you think so?" answered Amy, raising the eyes which had before been fixed on the ground.

"I do not think so now," he replied, looking into those tearful eyes, so full of affection and gentle reproach. "But have you no words with which to console me?"

"Ah! Cecil, I want consolation myself; how then can I give it to you? How dark and lonely will all things seem when you are gone. How shall I have the heart to sing, to draw, to read, when you will not be by to smile, to correct, to encourage me? The sun will shine less brightly, the flowers and the woods seem blighted and faded; the song of the blackbird sound hard and discordant, and when I look into the lake, I shall see my own

face alone in the stream, and not yours beside it as heretofore."

Ah ! so it must ever be while young hearts continue to make their sunshine in human eyes !

"How dull and cold will all bright things become !" continued Amy, "and now in this my first great sorrow, since you called me sister, you to whom I have ever looked for strength and consolation, you will be far away, striving for learning, wealth, and station, perhaps, amid the stir and strife, thinking those dull whom you have left behind. If you should come back changed. They tell me such things are ?"

"Do you believe it possible ?" asked Cecil, half reproachfully.

"No dear Cecil ! no, I do not, I cannot believe it ! You can never change—never grow cold or unkind to the sister who owes you so much and loves you so truly. Shame on me for hinting the possibility ! but you

doubted me first and I spoke in vexation. Here is a proof of the over quickness of temper of which dear Mr. Alleyne so often warns. I never believed myself hasty before, and now stand self convicted. Will you not forgive me dear Cecil ?”

“That will I, my own Amy ! and love you the better for this charming frankness, only that I loved you too well before, to like you more. Yet I have no right to talk of forgiveness Amy, for mine was the first and worst fault too. I am older, and should know you better. We must console each other.”

“And dear Mr. Alleyne, he will feel it as much or more than we can do. It will be so dull at the Rectory after you go.”

“Yes he will miss me sadly I fear ; you must be more with him, dear Amy ! you must take my place in my absence, and be his child.”

“Has he not long looked on me as such ? I had hoped so Cecil.”

“He has dear Amy ! but now he will need

your society more. You must pet him—smile on him—sing to him—study with him—love him better than any one else—save me.”

“May I not love him as well?” asked Amy, with an arch look that seemed the brighter for the tears through which it gleamed.

“Never Amy, I was your first protector, and you must always love me better than all the world beside!”

“I ever shall dear Cecil! there is no fear of that,” said Amy earnestly, with sisterly simplicity, as well as sisterly affection. “And now tell me when you go, and above all when you come back, and why it has been resolved on so suddenly; in short tell me all—and everything?”

“I know not how I shall live without you, and cannot bear to think of our parting,” said Cecil, when all had been told and discussed.

“Let us think rather of our meeting again,” replied his companion cheerfully, trying to smile on him hopefully through her tears. “Mr.

Alleyne has often told us that we could not always enjoy our pleasant idleness, and that honorable exertion brings with it its own reward. You will be making yourself a name and a station, and I must learn to glory in your fame, and thus be consoled for your absence. Tell Doctor Dodsworth, that if he is kind to you, I will try and forgive his cruelty, though had I guessed the purpose of his visit I might not have been so friendly. And now let us go down to the lake."

They reached the lake and stood at the edge.

"No not there," said Amy, "but were the shadow of that beech falls so slightly on the water. Now bend down with me, and let me see your face with mine in the stream; that when you are away I may think I still see it there beside my own. But stop, not that sad face, you must look for a moment as you will do when we meet. You must smile on poor Amy! to cheer her. Yes that will do—I shall often come here," she said, as she turned away with

a sigh, after looking for some moments into the water, with that sweet, girlish romance which, however we may chide, passes away all too soon. "And now let us banish tears and fears, not to distress dear kind Mr. Alleyne. And hereafter let these bright words be our constant and unfailing motto, "Hope on, hope ever!"

"Be it so, dear Amy! you are the teacher now, and if Heaven permit I will achieve fame for myself, and a home for you."

"It will be done!" said Amy, with one of those sudden impulses common to quick, sensitive minds; and her words sounded prophetic in the young man's ears, both then and for ever afterwards.

Why dwell on the details of a first sad parting struggle? and, strive to hope as they would, each felt the pain of a separation, though only of a few months, yet each strove to lessen the grief of the other. As Mr. Alleyne was to accompany Cecil to Oxford, and spend a few days with Doctor Dodaworth, the pain of separ-

ation was for him deferred ; not so with poor Amy, who was thus doubly abandoned, and yet amid all her grief she tried to smile and speak of hope ; and it was not until Cecil was out of sight and hearing, that she gave way to the passionate sobs which she had no longer the power to repress.

“ Now don't cry so, dear child !—now don't,” began poor Mrs. Jelf, who seemed at her wit's end, not knowing how to console her, and crying herself for sympathy, while trying to comfort Amy. “ Don't cry so,—he will soon be back, and then he will have so many things to tell you. And he will come home a learned man, you may be sure of that, and be one of these days an Archbishop—or a Chancellor—or a great general—or a Lord Mayor—or something or other. And he has got all comfortable. I can tell you, for I packed his clothes myself, and gave him a list of them. It would have been a shame and disgrace to have sent him to Oxford, without a good stock

of linen, and in proper order too. And I managed to put up a few preserves unknown to him, so it will be a pleasant surprise when he opens the box. I put a little black-currant jelly in case he should get a sore throat; but I warned him particularly always to have his clothes aired, and never sit with wet feet. And then I put up a little strawberry and raspberry jam, because you are both so fond of it, and I dare say he will think of you when he eats it. We will get nicer things ready for him against he comes back. So don't cry Amy dear! now don't, and I will go and see about your favorite cream for dinner. I am sorry there is not a roasting pig, but we will have a roast fowl, you are very fond of that I know."

With all Amy's quickness and strength of feeling, there mingled a keen sense of the ridiculous, and the idea of stuffing an Oxonian's box with jams, caused a mirthful smile which checked for the moment her sobs, and convinced

the worthy housekeeper of the infallibility of her receipt for consolation.

"You are a little better now I see poor child, so I will just go and look after the cream;" and away went Mrs. Jelf, to the great relief of Amy; who was gone when the good woman returned, consulting with herself as she traversed the passages what dinner she should provide for Amy on the following day. Poor Mrs. Jelf! her belief in the infallibility of her cure for grief, was a little shaken when she found that even the roast fowl, and favorite cream, would have remained untouched, but for her mingled entreaties and commands.

CHAPTER XII.

That day did Amy roam idly and sadly from room to gallery, lake to wood, through all the places where she had wandered with Cecil the day before; but the next morning saw her at her studies with a calm if not joyous air, compelling herself to constant occupation, and reaping by this self control as she had been early taught, a peaceful spirit and a thankful mind.

Cecil should find her improved in all things

when he returned, she too was to win by her own exertions, bread if not fame, and idleness was no fitter for her than for him. When tears unbidden came into her eyes they were resolutely driven back; when her thoughts would have recurred to the parting hour, she forced them forward to the time of meeting. Mr. Alleyne's lessons were now put into practice, and the seed he had sown bringing forth the fruit he had hoped.

Amy was waiting at the rectory to receive Mr. Alleyne on his return from Oxford, and wept in his arms while he told of Cecil, and his many messages, then wiping away her tears, she did her utmost to make the good old man forget, for a time at least, the absence of his sole remaining tie to earth: and grateful for her affectionate assiduity, he smiled upon her as she sat beside him, and blessed her when they parted for the night.

And day after day was Amy beside him as of old, sharing his studies, cheering his solitude,

being as Cecil had said, unto him as a daughter. It was touching and beautiful to see how sweetly she did her gentle ministering; how she watched his looks to read his wishes; how she choose the books he liked; how she sang the songs he loved to hear; how she sobered down her own quick, airy tread to his slower pace, and gladdened his life with her sweet, bright smiles. Nor was it less touching to see how he bent himself to her watchful care; how he listened to her coming steps; how his heart grew lighter as he met her loving glance, and how he reaped on earth the full reward of all his care and kindness to the poor deserted orphan.

Was Cecil forgotten then? was his absence no longer lamented? Not so. His letters were received with eager eyes and panting hearts, all thoughts of things past, present and to come, referred to him, and all things joyous were to come to pass when he should return.

Such excessive sorrow for the departure of a

young man to Oxford, would have appeared ridiculous under other circumstances, but Cecil had not been parted from those who mourned his absence for a single day, during more than five years; he had been their constant companion, the sharer of their studies and their walks, he was the one to whom they were bound up in love. How Amy read and re-read his letters which were long and frequent; how she counted the days until she should see him again; how anxiously she watched for his coming, from the highest hill which commanded a view of the road to Oxford.

He came, and the pain of their parting was forgotten in the joy of their meeting. He came unchanged, save that he had grown more manly, and all was bright again. It was winter, and the wind howled without, and snow fell thick and fast, but what cared the warm and happy hearts within for the storm and the cold without? And then they had all so much to see, to hear, to tell, it seemed as if half had



not been heard or told, when Cecil was called on to leave them again.

This second parting was less sad than the first; having come back once, Amy no longer doubted his returning again, and each time when Oxford term began, there was on all sides more of hope and less of sorrow; parting was no longer such a new and startling pain.

Summer came again and the young people roamed through the woods as in their childish days, or sat by the aged grandfather, making him feel young again with their sunny smiles and sportive talk. Then winter once more, with its ice and snow, and so the time went on. Summer and winter, joy and sorrow, smiles and tears—such is daily life!

In spite of his home education and secluded life, thanks to the judicious training of his grandfather, Cecil overcame the difficulties that lay in his path. The open regard of Doctor Dodsworth insured him civility from those in his own college, his ready wit and general gay

good humour gave him the best of the joke when bantered, whilst his frank avowal of poverty and steady adherence to what he considered right, won for him the respect of the well principled. He had his errors and follies, no doubt, but they were not such as many had predicted from his secluded rearing. If he got into a scrape from his inexperience, he was sure to get well out of it again through his frankness and high principle, whilst his love of study saved him from many of the temptations which beset the idle. To have wasted in extravagance, that which his grandfather had saved by denying himself the luxuries which many would have considered necessities, would, in his eyes, have been a heinous sin, the sin of ingratitude, and when spendthrifts found that he cared little for the nickname 'niggard,' and could give back banter for banter but rarely losing his temper, the freshman was allowed to pursue his own course with little or no molestation. We say rarely losing his temper, for

there were times when the passion against which his grandfather warned him was clearly perceptible to himself, even when unnoticed by others. It is rarely that quickness of intellect is unaccompanied by a like quickness of temper, and the boasted strength of the one should give us power to subdue the other.

His knowledge of the classics was beyond dispute—the “little go”—what a vulgar term! was passed without difficulty, and ambitious of obtaining honours, the greater part of Cecil's time was devoted to the studies that should ensure them.

Soon after this an event happened at the rectory which awakened all Amy's wildest hopes and direst fears—hopes which would keep haunting her in spite of her present happiness, for the spirit of youth is ever restless, of discovering who and what she really was, and the fear lest that still dreaded grandfather should come to claim her.

A letter arrived one morning, directed to

Mr. Alleyne, in a strange hand, and bearing the London post-mark, but with no name or address inside, enclosing notes to the amount of three hundred pounds, together with a brief and hurried scrawl, informing him that they were to be used in payment of the expenses incurred in the education of Miss Fitzallan, and that the same sum would, probably, be repeated, should the writer see occasion. The letter was coldly worded, not a syllable of kindness for poor Amy ! or thanks to the guardian who had befriended and protected her when she stood alone and deserted by all else ; and that, too, without the hope of any reward save the approbation of Heaven, and his own warm heart.

Amy's tears fell fast and silently on the paper which the good rector had placed in her hands, and for a moment she keenly felt its chill and stately heartlessness, but the mood, as usual with her, was not of long continuance,

and looking up with glistening eyes, she said—

“After all, it is best as it is. My grandfather, for I feel sure it is to him we are indebted for this letter, it is plain neither loves or cares for me—nor do I want his love, or his care either, thanks to you, or his money—only that I may be able to repay you in some measure the large debt of gratitude which has gone on accumulating for so long. And yet gold cannot repay kindness,” added the grateful girl, as she kissed the hand of her companion with deep feeling.

“You owe me nothing my child!” said the rector affectionately. “And whatever I may have done for you years ago, your love and tenderness has rewarded me ten hundred times over. And as for this three thousand pounds, I will not touch a shilling of it, but put it all carefully by for you, and be thankful that my little Amy will not be left entirely portionless.”

"Oh! how kind—how like you! But Cecil—can we do nothing for Cecil with it? I have heard say that wealth can work wonders."

Mr. Alleyne could scarcely forbear smiling at Amy's limited idea of wealth. "Depend upon it," said he, "that industry and perseverance are still more powerful, and both of these are his. Where poverty in some few instances cramps and subdues the mind; riches far oftener sap and enervate its highest and noblest energies. Cecil wants no stimulus to fame, and no aid but his own strong will and intellect—and heaven's blessing!" added the rector meekly.

Amy's bright eyes glittered with pride while he spoke, and yet she was a little disappointed too.

"Can I then do nothing either for him or you?"

"Nothing more than you are constantly

doing every day of your life Amy, making the happiness of ours."

"Ah flatterer!" said the girl, flinging her arms caressingly around him, "and you think thus to coax me out of having my own way?"

"Which you get, according to Mrs. Jelf, a great deal too often," said Mr. Alleyne, in the same playful tone.

"Yes it was but this morning that she told me I was quite spoilt of late, and when I asked her who had helped to do greater part of the mischief, she had not a word more to say on the subject."

"I believe we are as bad as one another," replied the rector. "And now as the heiress of a whole three hundred pounds, with no one knows how much more in perspective, there will be no such thing as bearing with you."

"Take away the temptation then," said Amy coaxingly. "Oh! I do wish that you would, for what after all is the use of money if

we may not devote it to the service of those we love?"

"Now you are reasoning like a child and a minor as you are; wait until you come of age and then you will be at liberty to do as you like."

"You promise me that? But it is a long time to stay," added Amy, with a strange feeling of sadness, "and who knows what may have come to pass in the interval?"

"God only, my child! but let us trust to Him without fear. The present is ours, the future His alone."

"But if—if," said Amy, still following out the tangled chain of her own thoughts, "my grandfather should ever claim me, must I go with him? Must I leave you and Cecil? Will you yield me up?"

"All that must depend in a great measure upon circumstances; not certainly, unless it be

for your own good, and happiness, or at your own request."

"Oh! that will never be!" said Amy, joyfully.

"I do not think, however," continued the rector, "that from the tone of the letter just received, we need anticipate any such event as at all likely to take place. It seems to me as if pride, rather than affection had prompted the bequest, which may possibly be repeated from the same feeling, without leading to any other result. But I am wrong to prejudice you against, perhaps, your only relative."

"Oh! no, indeed, you cannot make me fear him more than I do already. I used to hate and fear him, years ago, when I was a child, and until you taught me how wicked it was to hate any one, although I can never forget how cruel he was to poor, dear mamma!"

"And yet it was her dying wish that you

should seek his protection," said Mr. Alleyne, thoughtfully, "you must remember this too, should the choice be ever offered to you."

"Oh! it will not—I hope and trust it will not!" replied his companion hastily, "and would rather stay here always with you and dear Cecil! than go away to be made a Queen!"

"Or the heiress of Castle Coombe!" said the rector archly, "which was, if I recollect rightly, your childish ambition?"

"Ah! I should not object to that even now, since in that case we could be still together, which was, I think, the old bargain. But here am I idling away the morning talking to you, and poor Mrs. Jelf up to her elbows in pickling and preserving, and trying with all her might to be angry with me for not coming to help her. But there is one thing more I want to ask you, if the money is to be really and truly my own, I suppose I may spend a very little of it?"

“What, does it begin to burn already, Amy? In virtue, however, of my office as guardian and trustee, I must first of all demand a knowledge of the required sum ; and if it is not too great a secret, the uses to which it is to be applied, seeing that you are as I said before, yet in your minority.”

“Oh ; no secret at all, at least from you. First, I want a new set of china tea-things for good Mrs. Marsh, that being her one great ambition. A nice, smart looking gown for Martha, who was so kind to me years ago, when I was staying with Mrs. Hopkins ;” and Amy shuddered even now at the recollection. “Then something, but I have not quite made up my mind what it shall be, for Mrs. Jelf ; and silk to net Cecil, and some one else too, perhaps, if he is very good, and lets me have my own way, the prettiest purse in the world ! Let me see, that is all, I think, at present.”

“And quite enough for a beginning,” said

Mr. Alleyne, secretly pleased with her grateful spirit, which never forgot a kindness once received. "Now go and help Mrs. Jelf, and to-morrow I will borrow a gig, and take you over to D — to make your several purchases."

"A thousand thousand thanks!" said Amy, as she bounded away with a light heart, and a smile so glad and joyous, that the worthy housekeeper, looking up as she entered, forgot to chide her delay, and declared that she came into that dark room like a sunbeam!

"Why what is this?" said Amy, taking down a jar from one of the shelves, most curiously labelled 'Cecil,' and holding it with a laughing air towards the disconcerted housekeeper. "You put me in mind of the fairy tale of the Genii who kept the souls of his victims bottled up and ticketed!"

"I know nothing of fairy tales, or Genii either," replied the old lady stiffly, "it must have been a mistake."

"Yes to be sure, dear Jelfy ! I have made a thousand such myself since he has been gone, and shall, no doubt, make a thousand more. But mind you I shall expect to have every bit of the contents of this said jar, which must needs be doubly sweet !"

"You shall have what you will, only be a little steadier, Amy."

"Then I will be as grave as any judge, but you must set me something to do to keep me out of mischief. And I have so much to tell you presently, when you are less busy."

Like a true woman as she was, the house-keeper was not long in finding ample leisure to listen to Amy's communication ; and bright and ambitious were her golden dreams for her young protégée, which she had, however, the singular prudence to keep in a great measure to herself, earnestly and warmly congratulating her on an accession of fortune which seemed

almost as vast to the simple housekeeper, as it had done to Amy herself.

Mr. Alleyne kept his promise the following day, and Amy had the happiness of distributing her presents with her own hands and watching the beaming and delighted countenance of the good baker's wife, who knew not whether to be most pleased with the gift itself, or the dear young lady's kind remembrance of her ; and declared she should never sit down to her favourite meal, without thinking of and blessing the generous donor. Then who so pleased as Martha, with her warm, bright coloured gown ? except it might be Mrs. Jelf, as she walked to church on the following Sunday with a new bible and prayer-book, in a neat and handsome morocco case, with gilt clasps, and printed so clearly and distinctly that she could almost see to read it without her spectacles.

Cecil had to wait for his present, but then there was the long, affectionate letter, in which

it was promised ; and the consciousness that even while he toiled so hard, sometimes day and night, Amy was working too, all quietly in the rectory garden, or seated by his grandfather's side, and working for, and thinking of him only. But it came at length, and with it a chain woven out of Amy's own long hair. It is true that Mrs. Jelf scolded dreadfully at her having it cut off, and Mr. Alleyne thought it almost a pity ; but the girl reminded them with a smile that it would be grown again before Cecil came back.

Happy Cecil ! with that chain about his neck, and that purse in his pocket, albeit it was none of the heaviest ; he felt himself equal to all manner of toil and privation, and half confident of success. Nor was the good rector left without the promised reward, which was none the less prized for coming somewhat late, Amy apologising for making Cecil's first, by the fact of his being away from them all, and

it must be such a comfort in that case to receive anything from home, an excuse which, being unneeded, was smilingly accepted by Mr. Alleyne.

CHAPTER XIII.

TIME as we have said went on, when does it stay for tears or prayers? Cecil had been more than two years at Oxford, and Castle Coombe was in a bustle, for the family were coming down immediately.

“Girls will be girls, but young ladies should be young ladies, and not rush about like mad cows!” began Mrs. Jelf, with a stately tone and manner, as Amy stood before her panting and

breathless. "You are going on for seventeen, and what will the Countess say to such hoydenish manners? She never goes out of a graceful walk herself."

"Well don't be angry, dear Jelfy! or hear me first and scold me afterwards. I was running a race with Thomas, and should have lost it had I walked soberly."

"Running a race with Thomas! Running a race with the footman! that I should live to hear of such a thing of Miss Fitzallan! of a young lady in whose education I have had some share," exclaimed Mrs. Jelf, letting a jelly mould fall from her hands, in the excess of her horror at such an enormity, an accident which it may be supposed did not serve to restore the good humour already ruffled by some household *contre tems*.

"Don't be shocked, dear Mrs. Jelf!" she did not dare say Jelfy again, "it was not so bad as you think. Thomas did not know I was

running a race with him, for he was on the other side of the hedge."

"A real lady never does on one side of a hedge what she would not do on the other," observed Mrs. Jelf, looking very much as if she had swallowed not only the poker, but the fire, shovel, and tongs besides. And yet it was a good old proverb nevertheless.

"Had I walked, I should have been too late to help one, who showed me kindness when I most needed it;" answered Amy excusingly.— "Here comes Thomas, to ask you to take his cousin as under-housemaid, it was overhearing him say this which made me run to be first. Martha has just been begging me to procure the situation for her. Do let her have it my dear Mrs. Jelf! I do think I should have died at the Hopkinses but for her."

"I know nothing of her character or abilities," remarked the stately housekeeper, the shadow of a shade more graciously.

The entrance of Thomas to make his request, prevented all further comment.

"I will bear your cousin in mind, but some one else has applied before you," replied Mrs. Jelf, glancing at Amy.

Thomas caught the glance and cherished a spite against Amy, for standing in the way of his cousin.

The patience with which Amy listened to a long lecture on the proprieties, as she and Cecil called it in their mirth, so softened Mrs. Jelf, that Martha after due enquiry concerning character &c. was engaged as under-housemaid and gratified by some gracious praise of her former conduct

"Now you shall scold me just as much as you like for the next fortnight," said the grateful Amy. "And I could almost find it in my heart to promise not to run any more, only that I fear I might break my word, which would be a great deal worse than not saying any thing at all about it."

Mrs. Jelf smiled, and wondered within herself how it was she ever could scold one so beautiful and affectionate; and then she half wished that Amy was less beautiful, and so fell into a train of sad and strange musing, upon what might be the after lot of that young and now happy girl.

"May I know of what you are thinking?" asked her companion after a pause. "Is it as usual, of the Countess' arrival?—Or whether Martha will turn out a good house-maid?—Or this mould of jelly become as steady—as steady as your humble servant?"

"Yes, I was thinking of you," said the house-keeper abruptly.

"And in kindness I am sure," replied the girl with a touch of grateful feeling.

"I was thinking that you were growing very pretty of late, Amy," said the old lady, scarcely conscious that she was speaking aloud.

"Yes, so Cecil told me when he came back last," replied Amy simply.

"But did he warn you at the same time, how beauty is far oftener a snare than a blessing?"

"No, I don't recollect that he said anything about that."

"But you are not proud, Amy."

"Oh! yes I am a little. And I have often thought that I should like of all things to be very, very handsome!"

"And what could possibly give rise to so foolish a wish?"

"Because I have heard say that all love the beautiful! Talent requires to be known before it can properly be admired and appreciated; and even a good and sweet temper, the greatest of all earthly blessings, according to Mr. Alleyne, is not discernible at first sight; but beauty captivates on the instant."

"And such is your ambition, Amy?"

"Oh! yes surely, and a very natural one too, as it seems to me. Not that I care much about the love of any one else in the world but Cecil, and Mr. Alleyne, and yourself; but then I

should like to win it in order that you may all be proud of me."

"Pshaw!" said the housekeeper, seriously displeased, "it is very well for a woman to talk of being proud of a man, that is of his genius or learning, but who ever heard of one setting herself up for an idol to be worshipped, whose place and happiness it must ever be to play the worshipper. Depend upon it whatever notions to the contrary you may have got into your head, that the best wives, and daughters, and mothers, aye and the most loved and respected too, are not the most beautiful or the cleverest. And she who is gentle, and dutiful, and meek-spirited; with just beauty enough to please her husband's peculiar taste,—sufficient wisdom only to appreciate his, and not above making his wishes and pursuits her constant study, from the highest branches of literature, to the more simple, but equally efficacious superintendence of some favourite dish, is most likely to be not

only happy in herself, but the source of happiness to all around her."

"All this is very true no doubt," said Amy demurely, "and Mrs. Ellis herself could not have expressed it better. But you have a little misunderstood the matter my dear Mrs. Jelf. Believe me I have no great ambition at present for a pedestal, the situation being too cold and isolated to prove very agreeable. You remember the old song.

"Oh! the idol on its pedestal
Is a very lonely thing!
Better be one of the common crowd
Who come there worshipping."

But seriously speaking, one cannot help getting prettier, can they Mrs. Jelf?—There is no recipe I could take to prevent a consummation so greatly to be dreaded, is there?"

The old housekeeper was not proof against the witching brightness of those arch and mischievous eyes, nor could she for the life of her

find it in her heart to wish them a whit less brilliant.

"And would you take it Amy, if there were?"

"I don't know, not certainly without consulting Cecil, seeing that if I am good looking enough, as it is, to suit his peculiar taste, it does not signify," answered the girl, playfully quoting her companion's own words.

"Are you aware of the conclusions to be inferred from your last speech?" asked Mrs. Jelf, evincing strong symptoms of returning stateliness.

"No indeed."

"I suspected as much, and this comes of speaking as you always do without thought. What I said just now, referred if you remember only to husbands and wives."

Amy coloured, but she still laughed.

"Cecil is not my husband certainly," said she simply, "only my brother. But I am just as anxious to please him for all that."

"You are a silly child!" observed the old housekeeper, thinking it wisest perhaps to let the subject drop for the present.

"And shall never grow wiser I fear you think, by that grave and melancholy shake of the head."

"Oh! yes, wisdom is sure to come sooner or later," said Mrs. Jelf, a momentary feeling of sadness stealing over her mind, as she reflected how very seldom it brings with it any addition to our happiness.

"Then one of these days I hope to grow as good and as steady as yourself?"

"Better, much better," said the housekeeper, with an affectionate warmth of manner that seemed strange and unusual in her, that is not the feeling itself but the expression of it; "for you have one blessing, which time and care has soured, if not utterly destroyed in me;—the blessing of a sweet and even temper!"

"What when I am so very often naughty and passionate, and you always so patient and

kind to bear with me? You must not say that again dear Jelfy! or it will be my turn to scold." And Amy, flinging her arms around the neck of her old friend, pressed a fond kiss upon her withered cheek.

"There go away now, little flatterer!" said the housekeeper trying to smile, and pushing Amy from her, lest she should have time to notice the gushing tears that would not be restrained, although she felt ashamed of betraying such an emotion. And the girl obeying her from an intuitive feeling of delicacy, quitted the Castle and went bounding along the fields, with a light step, until suddenly struck with the recollection of the worthy housekeeper's simile between herself and a mad cow; she involuntarily slackened her pace, walking gravely onwards, although with a laughing eye and merry heart.

"In spite of Mrs. Jelf," reasoned the wilful girl, "I cannot quite give up my longing after beauty as one of the greatest blessings of

existence to a woman, since it is the most likely to win her all else worth living for, the love of others. And then it is something to feel that they may well be proud of you. A very plain girl may be just as fond and affectionate, just as devoted, but she will never have so many opportunities of evincing it; and cannot show her deep love for the one, by the careless manner in which she receives the eagerly proffered homage of the many. Oh! what if I should be a great heiress after all, as good Mrs. Marsh so often prophesies—and grow rich and beautiful! and be courted and admired by all the world, and still love no one better than dear Cecil!”

Such were Amy's romantic and somewhat ambitious dreams—such her young, trustful faith both in herself and others. Her fearlessness of change—her simple and confiding love—her vain yearnings. How were they realized at length? Are such always fabulous? Not surely if we are careful to lay a deep founda-

tion for our airy castles—our glorious imaginings, in faithful and kindred hearts. Let us hope not at least for her sake, who went on weaving them with a wild ingenuity worthy of a better and more profitable occupation, a pleasanter we could scarcely wish her. It is happiness to dream thus, even though we know it will be but a *dream* after all.

CHAPTER XIV.

"WHEN are the Earl and Countess expected?" asked Mr. Alleyne, as Amy, throwing off her bonnet, took her seat beside him.

"To-morrow, I wish they would stay away," replied Amy, pettishly.

"Why do you wish that?" demanded the rector, desiring the same in his heart, but thinking it wisest not to say so.

"Why do I wish it, dear grandpapa?" for so

Amy often called him. " Oh ! for a thousand reasons. In the first place I detest a bustle, it distracts my mind from my studies, and there has been nothing but hurry, skurry, fuss and flurry, for the last three weeks, making all fit for the Countess Bugbear ! for such should be her name, as you hear nothing every minute but ' but what will the Countess say ? ' ' what will the Countess think ? ' then such rubbing and scrubbing. No stirring three steps without falling into a pail, or over a brush. I could not go into this room ; it was the Countess's boudoir—I could not go into that, that was the Earl's study—I could not go into the lower rooms they were putting up the curtains in those, I could not sit in the upper rooms, the green was to be Lady Anne's—the blue, Lady Charlotte's, and worst of all I must not sit in the dear, old gallery, for that is everybody's room, at least everybody's but mine, so that must be doubly dusted and not sat in afterwards. I just peeped in before and I came away, I thought

the old carving looked sad at my absence and the old pictures beckoned me to enter."

"But your own room Amy, why could not you sit there? Half of these troubles come from your roving disposition."

"Oh! no grandpapa; if you did but hear the din going on close to my little room you would understand and pity me. Such hammering in the china cupboard and school room on either side—such shelves for books and tea-cups. I staid till I began to fancy myself a nail, and that some one was knocking me on the head; and then I ran down to you, at least ran when out of dear Jelfy's sight, for she scolds me for running when she sees it, saying 'what will the Countess think of it?' and wants to make me march like a grenadier, and be as formal and pokery as herself. If I did not love her so much I should be cross very often."

"I hope you are not cross now Amy," observed the rector significantly.

"I am afraid I am a little ; but I try ever to keep in mind your warnings against my quick temper," replied Amy blushing. "Oh ! it is such a delight to be with you here, dear grandpapa ! where all is so quiet, so peaceful, and we can talk about dear Cecil ! and I may laugh and run as I please. It is of no use to try and make me a stiff piece of formality, I was not made out of that sort of stone."

"Many a true word spoken in jest Amy," replied the rector smiling ; "but there is a difference between formality and dignity. You are going on for seventeen, you told me the other day, and must think a little more of the proprieties as you and Cecil call them."

"Do you, too, think me a hoyden, dear grandpapa ?" asked Amy a little reproachfully.

"No my child ! were all things to remain as they are, I would still have you as gladsome and sportive as a fawn, knowing that you have a steady mind beneath this girlish joyousness,

which will keep you from running into folly ; but all do not know you as I do, and your residence at Coombe Castle must now be on a different footing to what it has been. Strangers may judge you less kindly than much attached friends ; you have no claim on the Countess, and she may not wish you to continue beneath her roof."

" Do you think she will send me away ? Ah ! then what will become of me ? Who will receive me ? How shall I live without you ?"

" Is this the patient truth with which I have sought to inspire you ?" asked Mr. Alleyne reproachfully. " Away with those tears ! Were you to quit the Castle now, of which, I trust, there is no chance, here is your home as well a father."

" Forgive me dear grandpapa !" said Amy, as Mr. Alleyne imprinted a paternal kiss on her brow. " I was very naughty, but I did not

understand ; and in the fear of leaving you, forgot everything else. I thought you meant I might be turned out of the Castle."

" Not that exactly Amy, but the Countess is critical about manners, and by moulding these at least in some degree to meet her taste, you might secure her aid for the future."

" Oh ! dear ; here is the Countess Bugbear again !" exclaimed Amy impatiently. Then ashamed of her pettishness, she added more humbly, " I will try and do all you wish, but if you knew the long lectures Mrs. Jelf has been reading me for the last three weeks you would not wonder at my being a little out of humour."

" If you cannot bear trifling trials, my child, how will you endure great ones ? Yet great ones in your situation, as I have ever told you, you may, nay, I fear, must encounter." Amy looked down rebuked, and Mr. Alleyne continued. " Your position at

the Castle, even with prudence on your part and kindness from all the Earl's family, must ever be awkward and anomalous, if not painful. Mrs. Jelf's affection and teaching, advantageous as both have been, like most advantages, has also its drawbacks, as it seems to mark your place more in the housekeeper's room than the saloon. While the education bestowed by Cecil and myself, has tended to fit you to be the instructress of those in a higher rank in life. In the school room you would be most free from awkward comments and uncongenial society, but it is not for me to fix on your station in the household. A few moments' consideration will show you the extent of the difficulties at which I have hinted."

"I understand," said Amy with a grave and saddened expression, "I have neither the right to expect to be treated as an equal, nor to resent being treated as an inferior." Then glancing up with a slightly curling lip, she

added more gaily, "as dear Jelfy said one day when she thought me out of hearing, 'I am neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor good red herring, neither servant nor lady !' Well, it is not pleasant to belong to no tribe, to be picked out of one for having no shaggy mane, or driven out of a third for having no fins, and not even allowed a place in the pickling tub ; but I must do my best to remedy the hardship and found a tribe of my own, making it so honorable, that to belong to it shall be considered a distinction. instead of a disgrace ! In sober earnest dear, grandpapa ! I will try and show that your kind and judicious teaching has not been thrown away. You warned me from the first that trials must come ; but I have been so happy that I forgot the warning. I will really try and be good, and she laid her young face coaxingly on the old man's shoulder, and pressed his hand to her lips.

"Bless you, my child ! and God will bless

you! giving you strength to work His will. The Countess as I said before, may serve you hereafter, she is not unfeeling, but she is haughty and critical, thinking more of manners perhaps than we simple country folks deem needful. She would have every thing and every one round her, not only quiet but noiseless, she expects submission too, I warn you of this because I desire that you should please her."

"So does Mrs. Jelf, and you warn me, and warn me till I tremble at the thought of entering her presence, and shall certainly stand before her pale, mute, and motionless, till unable to endure the restraint any longer, I rush from the room shocked at myself, and shocking all my kind friends. I am in despair, I would try and please the Countess, but I can never please any one if I am to feel constrained and not be natural."

"There is much truth in that Amy, I admit,

though less with the Countess perhaps than most people, so it will be better to leave you to your own observation and right feeling, than worry you into a fright with any more lectures"

"A little sop for Cerberus grandpapa," said Amy laughing. "I accept it graciously, and will try not to bark with any of my three mouths, only letting a soft, puppy, voice out of the corner of one."

"Take care," said Mr. Alleyne warningly, though unable to help joining in her laugh.

"I really do mean to be good, but oh! what a blessing it must be to have a long genealogy, and a large fortune, and then I might be fish, flesh, or fowl, or a good red herring just as the fancy took me!"

"It is a greater blessing Amy, to use the talents God Has given to his glory, in the station in which He has seen fit to place you."

“ So it is dear Mr. Alleyne! and I hope to feel so in time,” replied Amy ingenuously. “ That was a fresh piece of wilfulness. I am sure I shall not like or please this Countess Bugbear! and I wish she had never come. Don’t be vexed with your own Amy, I felt that I must say these things once again and now I hope my naughtiness is over for to-day. Let us talk of dear Cecil! and then take a walk, I am always better among trees and flowers, their quiet beauty rebukes my petulance, and fills my heart with love and gratitude.”

Perhaps Mr. Alleyne had some such superstition, for he willingly assented to her request, and the sweet and holy calm of nature was not without its effects on the minds and hearts of each.

“ Good night dear grandpapa!” said Amy, taking leave of Mr. Alleyne, who had walked half of the way back with her. “ I shall be

with you again to-morrow as soon as I have filled the vases with flowers, and arranged all things in my lady's boudoir, I did not say Countess Bugbear then, so you see I am getting good. Mrs. Jelf is in such a fidget lest I should pop on her ladyship unawares and incur her displeasure, or cross the maid, or commit some other such great impropriety, that she will be glad to get me out of the house till you and she have warned her ladyship of my monkey tricks, and won her indulgence. Oh dear! oh dear! I thought myself a well behaved person until three weeks since, but I find I am no such thing now. I wonder whose fault that is," she added archly. "I did not teach myself. Good night! good night! you must not stand in the cold," and kissing her hand she bounded away, but slackened her pace ere she reached the Castle; enough had been said to make her thoughtful if not sad, and moreover in Mrs.

Jelf's present mood she feared to enter her presence even flurried.

Poor Amy! the stone had been thrown, the calm of her existence was ruffled, and the circles were spreading wider and wider.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Earl of Castle Coombe and his family had been many years abroad, and the bustle of his return seemed to be in proportion to the length of his absence. The Earl assigned as the reason of this absence, the delicate health of his lady and eldest daughter, but his enemies hinted at debt and embarrassments, some said from gambling, and some from the

habit of himself and his father before him, of living far beyond their income.

Great as was the bustle, however, Mrs. Jelf found time to come into Amy's room the very night of the family's arrival, to tell her that the Countess had approved of the tasteful way in which she had arranged the flowers, and had desired that such might continue her office during her stay at the Castle.

Amy had just returned from the rectory, and her bonnet concealed the expression of her features. Supposing her highly gratified by the Countess's praise of her taste, Mrs. Jelf went on to give other proofs of her ladyship's condescension, who had listened without interrupting her, she said, while speaking of Amy, though to be sure she had said but little of her that night, as her ladyship seemed rather fatigued with her journey, and Mr. Alleyne would speak better than she could do, on the morrow. Perhaps Amy had better keep in her room, or at least out of the way of the

Countess, till the good rector had paid his visit.

Amy assented to the suggestion, and then asked how she liked the young ladies, who were but children when she saw them last.

“ Lady Anne is just like the Countess, just what an Earl’s daughter should be, so beautiful and graceful, and I dare say Lady Charlotte will be the same, only she is younger now so a little more merry. Miss Maxwell the governess, is as civil spoken as ever and has not brought back any foreign airs, so keep up your spirits my dear child and I dare say the Countess will be very gracious, and allow you to remain at the Castle, and perhaps sometimes read to her and the young ladies,” so saying the good woman, after kissing Amy, swept out of the room with even a more dignified air than usual.

Mrs. Jelf had intended to ease Amy’s mind and impress her with admiration for the Countess ; but the impression on Amy’s mind

was the contrary to what she desired or expected.

“The Countess is gracious, she never says the Countess is kind,” thought Amy as she sat resting her head on her hand, instead of disrobing for the night, and Lady Anne is like her, just what an Earl’s daughter should be. I shall like Lady Charlotte the best. All seem to measure their words when they speak of the Countess ; no one speaks frankly or warmly of her. I knew I should not like her, but I promised Mr. Alleyne not to say this again, or think it if I could help it. So now to bed, to dream of dear Cecil I hope.”

“The Countess has sent for you,” exclaimed Mrs. Jelf on the morrow, bursting into Amy’s room with unwonted haste. “And dear me you have your plainest frock and collar on, I made sure you would have changed them, and now there is no time to do it,” she added in vexation.

“The frock and collar are quite handsome

enough for the Countess's dependant," replied Amy rather proudly, closing her book with great deliberation.

"How odd you are looking Amy, I don't know what to make of you."

"There is nothing strange in that dear Mrs. Jelf! for I do not know what to make of myself," replied Amy frankly. "Where is Mr. Alleyne?"

"With the Countess, waiting to present you to her."

"Dear, kind Mr. Alleyne!" exclaimed Amy warmly.

"There let me see if your hair is tidy, yes that will do, but I wish you had had your other frock on, the Countess likes people to dress handsomely, and she thinks a great deal of manners too, and the way in which persons enter the room. I have taken great pains with you in this; but I wish you could have had a few more dancing lessons. Now don't run in head foremost, and be sure and say my

lady, and your ladyship, and behave with submission and yet an easy dignity, as I have always set you the example."

So talked on Mrs. Jelf, as she walked by her pupil's side ; but Amy heard little of this harangue, save the latter part, and her ease and dignity appeared so distinct from the stiff, formal figure beside her, that she could not help smiling at the thought.

"Stop a minute child and compose yourself," began Mrs. Jelf, but Amy had already entered the room, and the door was closing behind her. "There she's gone in laughing. What will the Countess think of her?" exclaimed poor Mrs. Jelf.

The Countess was her world—her Mrs. Grundy!—and it was always what will the Countess say?—What will the Countess think?—If she could have understood how little the Countess ever said or thought of those whom she considered in a lower sphere than her own, she would have saved herself and others an im-

mentis of needless anxiety. No one but the formal housekeeper, would have quarrelled with the smile that dimpled the cheek of Amy Fitzallan, as she entered the boudoir of this bugbear Countess. The good old rector was delighted, and glanced at his adopted child with as much honest pride as warm affection.

"The Castle is still to be your home my child, and you must help me to thank the Countess for her kindness," said Mr. Alleyne, taking Amy's hand and leading her towards her ladyship.

"I know not how to thank her, but if my gratitude is silent, I beg her Ladyship to believe that it is not the less deep and sincere."

"I do believe you," said the Countess, holding out her hand with less of mannerism and more of feeling than she usually exhibited.

"Amy pressed the soft white hand of the Countess, and if the pressure was not returned, it was not resented. "I have done her injus-

tice," thought the warm hearted girl, "and must love her the more to repair the wrong."

Amy Fitzallan, the child of nobody—the beggar—the dependent—the future governess—love the Countess of Castle Coombe! and think by this to repair the wrong of having misjudged her. The possibility of such an idea never entered her ladyship's mind. She saw the ingenuous blush, the grateful glow, which the feeling caused and was attracted by it, but never guessed or enquired into the cause, it may be her vanity whispered it was the involuntary tribute of admiration.

Mr. Alleyne had spoken only of the poor orphan's destitute state, of her sweetness, her goodness, and steady principles, he had not said a word of her personal appearance and the Countess was startled—no the Countess was never startled, but she was surprised, and won by the unexpected grace and loveliness of her for whom her favour and countenance had been solicited. Without any grounds for the idea,

save a fancy that none but the aristocracy could be graceful she had expected to find the future governess amiable, it may be, but short, thick, and awkward. It is true Mrs. Jelf had said something about her pretty face and pretty manners, but what should she a housekeeper, though somewhat superior to most in her station, know of the latter? and surely Mr. Alleyne in his overweening affection, for such he had admitted it to be, would have said something in praise of her personal charms if anything could be said.

The Countess did not not say to herself as Amy had, "I have done her injustice and will love her the more to repair the wrong;" but she was agreeably surprised and pleased with the warmth as well as the natural grace of her manner; she received her thanks with even more than her wonted condescension and bade her take a seat beside her.

"Here is a beautiful addition to an old man's library," said Mr. Alleyne, directing

Amy's attention to some splendid engravings of the antiquities of Rome.

"Beautiful indeed !" replied Amy with the enthusiasm of one who not only saw, but felt their value.

"I shall be robbed I see," observed the good rector, reading in the Countess's smile at Amy's enthusiastic praise of her present anything rather than displeasure. "Ah ! well, if my grandchildren should rob me of my prints, they cannot rob me of the remembrance of the kindness of her who could think of the tastes of a poor old man in a foreign land. That will remain with me still."

"You should not have suspected me capable of forgetting you Mr. Alleyne," replied the Countess kindly, touched by the good rector's tone of feeling. "I shall ever remember how you watched and prayed with me by Dunorven's side after his fearful accident !"

"May he live long a blessing to himself

and all around him," replied Mr. Alleyne solemnly.

Bright tears glistened in Amy's eyes as she glanced from one to the other, and thought of the mother kneeling beside her only son, and the good rector joining his prayers to hers. So would her mother, had she been spared, have watched and prayed by her. Under no circumstances could the Countess have appeared more touching, more attractive to the young orphan to whom she had promised a home and protection. Never was she seen to more advantage than when conversing with the good rector, whose single minded zeal and gentle earnestness not only won her respect, but almost her regard, rebuking, and for the time, keeping in the back ground the worldly views which some believed were the moving springs of the mind of the Countess of Castle Coombe.

There was a silence of some moments, and then the Countess spoke, making some remark on the prints before them. The tearful eyes

of Amy, the simple, yet solemn attitude of Mr. Alleyne had made something like a scene ; and the Countess held that a scene, if not absolutely vulgar, was certainly not in good taste. Scenes were for theatres—they might sometimes, when not too violent, be permitted to the gentry, but were utterly inadmissible among the old aristocracy, which should maintain its superiority in manners as well as rank. Scenes did not befit a Countess, and if she did not stand by her order, she lived in it, and yet she had very nearly become an actor in a scene, indeed some might maintain that she had really taken her part.

Her remarks on Rome, from her having resided there sometimes, were unintentionally made in Italian, and Amy, from her habit of conversing in that language with Cecil, involuntarily answered in the same tongue, and the conversation was continued for some time.

“ I must compliment you on your pupil Mr.

Alleyne," said the Countess, struck with the purity of her pronunciation, and the fluency with which she spoke. "From what you said of her acquirements, I little expected such a good Italian scholar."

"The compliment is due to my grandson rather than me ; he was her principal tutor in foreign languages ; and grandpapa's French and Italian, which he learnt in his younger days, has sometimes been laughed at by his impertinent grandchildren," replied the rector, pleased with the praise bestowed on his pupil.

"Is she as good a French scholar ?" asked the Countess.

"Quite ; so her tutor says ; but then young teachers are apt to boast."

"How came she so well acquainted with the modern works in both these languages ?" inquired the Countess, after conversing for some time with Amy in French.

“Your Ladyship forgets the books which the Earl sent from abroad, and your kindness in appointing me librarian during your absence. The permission has been a high and daily gratification, and I trust your Ladyship will find that the office which I now resign, has not been ill performed. I think you will find the books in good order, and, thanks to Mrs. Jelf, without a grain of dust. An old man can boast as well as a young one, you will say.”

“I will say no such thing, Mr. Alleyne ; telling the truth is not boasting. But why give up your office if you would find any pleasure in retaining it. I would ask nothing of you that would be troublesome ; but without your care the books will soon be in sad disorder though perhaps, more from neglect than use ; and if I do not see you in your especial corner, I shall feel distressed, and you need fear no interruption, for the Earl will be generally in town attending to his duties in the House of

Lords. Dunorven is still abroad. Although I trust his return will not be much longer delayed," added the fond mother, "and my daughters are not learned ladies at present, and I trust never will be. So there is no one to distract your studies ; I shall expect to hear of your being there quite as often as usual."

" Your ladyship knows how to win an old man's heart ; books have long been my best, nay almost only amusement, and nothing will give me greater pleasure than retaining my office, and, with your kind permission, my constant visits to the library. If I should learn to consider my favorite corner mine by right of long use and not from courtesy, I shall, after the manner of the world, lay the blame on your ladyship's kindness, which emboldens me to ask another favor, namely, that my little Amy here may be appointed my deputy and assistant.

Since Cecil's absence we usually study together."

"Certainly Mr. Alleyne, she is too young to choose her own books, and may require hereafter that knowledge and study which is not needful for my daughters. She shall be as free to the library as yourself, only I must engage hersometimes to read and converse with my daughters in French and Italian, for poor Miss Maxwell, though a valuable person in many points, and strictly attentive to my wishes, has no delicacy of accent, and shocks my ear with her vile pronunciation!"

"Amy I am sure will be ever at your ladyship's command, and zealous to please both from duty and gratitude, but you must not quite rob me of my grandchild, one of the two dear crutches that I count on to support me to the grave."

"I will not do that Mr. Alleyne, her first

duty as well as her best affection should be yours; and you may rest assured I will never detain her from you, let her come to me at two and I will myself introduce her to the nursery."

"I thank you,—thank you most warmly!" said Mr. Alleyne, rising to take his leave.

"You will dine with us to-day?" said the Countess graciously. "I have some gems and intaglios to show you."

"With pleasure," replied the rector simply; but with a warmth which proved his sincerity.

"One of the servants shall take the prints to the Rectory," observed the Countess.

"They are too precious to be entrusted to the care of another. Amy will help me," replied Mr. Alleyne.

"Well, my child, what do you think of the Countess?" asked the rector, as he was putting away the prints in the safest place in his little study, after having examined each one separately.

"She must have been perfectly beautiful in her youth, even now she is nearly so, and her figure seems symmetry itself, every movement grace. Yes, her manner is both graceful and gracious. her voice more soft than my guitar. I admire her exceedingly, and there was something very touching when she spoke of watching beside her son, and something winning when she spoke to you about the library, but——"

"But what Amy? you have been pausing five minutes after the word."

"I don't know what, and yet I think there is a but, is there not? Do tell me dear grand-papa!"

"There are spots in the sun, they say, yet few have glasses keen enough to discover them. I am not going to find a meaning for your but, with those beautiful prints before my eyes, and the donor's sweet voice still ringing in my ears," replied Mr. Alleyne laughing. "Does she still

stand as Countess Bugbear in your edition of the Peerage?"

"No she is not Countess Bugbear! at least, not in the way I thought; she may chill me perhaps, but she will not frighten me."

"We shall see, she deserves your gratitude at least."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Countess' introduction of Amy, into the school-room, and the praise bestowed on her French and Italian, ensured her a civil if not a cordial welcome. Miss Maxwell, who had been always treated with respectful attention by Mrs. Jelf, instead of showing any repugnance to her being included in the reading lessons, expressed herself pleased at the arrangement and the youngest of her pupils said the same.

Lady Anne said nothing, it required a great deal to rouse her to the trouble of speaking to strangers not in her sphere of life, but she made a graceful inclination of the head and looked rather pleased than otherwise. She was a second Countess, the same tall, graceful figure, the same dazzling complexion, soft blue eyes and golden hair; the same slow, languishing movements, a little more languid perhaps if anything.

Lady Charlotte was rather younger, rather less beautiful, but far more lively; and Amy decided before she quitted the school-room, that she should be better friends with the younger than the elder sister.

"I must apply to my kind librarian for a translation," said the Countess of Castle Coombe, as Mr. Alleyne entered from the dining room. "I am but a poor German scholar."

"Scarcely as poor a one as myself; it is so

many years since I was in Saxony," replied the rector, approaching the couch on which her ladyship rather reclined than sat, in a splendid Parisian dress, every limb, every fold arranged in the most graceful position. "This is beyond me," he added shaking his head, "I find my memory of foreign languages, aye and of other things too, growing bad of late. Perhaps Amy may help us, she is a better German scholar than myself."

"Indeed. She seems a genius!"

"No, not a genius; I would not have your ladyship think that, but she is quick and persevering, two qualities not often joined, and then, to her, learning was but a labour of love, for she loved those who taught her. Besides she has known from the first how her talents must be employed."

"That was considerate, and may prevent presumption. I am glad she seems likely to repay your care."

"If your ladyship will permit me, I will take her the book and get her to translate this difficult passage."

"Do not give yourself that trouble Mr. Alleyne, only just ring the bell if you please, and Jones shall call her. As there is no one here she may as well come to you, as you go to her."

"Tell Miss Fitzallan I wish to speak to her in the saloon," was the message sent to Amy; and Miss Fitzallan stood before the Countess, wondering for what purpose she had been thus summoned.

The passage was translated, the Countess said something flattering, and Amy was going to leave the room when she was stopped by her ladyship saying—

"As we have no guest but your kind friend Mr. Alleyne, you can remain if you please, and look over those gems, or talk French to my daughters."

Amy glanced at the rector, a meaning smile passed between them, and then thanking the Countess for permission to look at the gems, she turned round to the table on which they were lying.

"Bring them here," said the Countess, "that I may explain them and hear Mr. Alleyne's remarks."

"Nature and art, the flower and the intaglio," thought Mr. Alleyne, as he looked from Amy with her natural grace and unadorned loveliness, to the splendid Countess, with her gorgeous dress and studied elegance. He was a partial judge, no wonder therefore if his eye rested longer on his adopted child.

"Your ladyship promised me some singing," said Mr. Alleyne, when the gems and intaglios had been duly examined and admired.

"I did, and will fulfil my promise, though late hours are not good for young people. My dears will you sing my favorite duet?"

The ladies Dunorven began to sing, and Amy approaching the piano, turned over the leaves.

"Do you sing?" asked Lady Charlotte.

"Not as you do," said Amy frankly. "I have never heard such singing before."

"We should sing well, we have had so many masters and practised so much."

"Does Miss Fitzallan play and sing then, with all her other accomplishments?" asked the Countess, who had overheard the conversation.

"She sings to the guitar, but in too simple a style to please your ladyship, and her playing is not worth naming, having had no better instructor than Wilnot the retired organist."

"Let me judge for myself, Mr. Alleyne; bid her bring her guitar."

"It is a sweet voice, and she sings in tune, but needs instruction sadly," observed the Countess, as Amy followed Lady Charlotte to

look at some music at the other end of the saloon. "I may give her some hints which will improve her, and, perhaps, Miss Maxwell will give her lessons now and then. In the present day a knowledge of music is considered as indispensable in a governess."

Knowing the Countess to be a skilful musician, though she now rarely played or sang, Mr. Alleyne thanked her for her kind intentions, and then begged another song from the young ladies, who again took their seats at the instrument, by their mother's desire.

"They should sing well, it is in our family," observed the Countess, in reply to the rector's thanks and praise.

"Anna, can you set this netting to rights for me?" asked her sister.

"No indeed I cannot, Charlotte, you are always making mistakes and troubling other people to set them to rights; besides I do not know how to net. It is too much trouble for me."

"Can I help your ladyship?" said Amy good naturedly.

"Oh do, there is a dear, good creature!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte.

"It is bed time my dears," observed the Countess. "And do not be so energetic, Charlotte, you know how much I dislike everything *prononcé*, it is such bad taste."

"Amy does not sing like the Lady Dunorvens, I doubt if she ever will," thought Mr. Alleyne, as he went on his way to the Rectory. "They have finer voices, and have been better taught, but they want heart, no teaching can give that. But heart would be too *prononcé* I suppose for the daughters of the Countess of Castle Coombe," and a half smile passed over his placid features at the fancy.

"She is lovely certainly even in that plain dress, and there is something in her smile which some might consider peculiarly winning. She is well formed too, and has a natural grace about

her that one rarely sees, especially in one of doubtful parentage. She has not the perfect repose and elegance of Anne, that is not to be expected, but she is not boisterous and I see no harm in her being occasionally with my daughters ; though easy and obliging she does not appear presuming. How she came by such manners under Mrs. Jelf's tuition, is an absolute marvel to me. But it is best as it is, for this *protégée* of good simple Mr. Alleyne, might have turned out to be some awkward country girl, whom it would have been impossible not only to have patronised, but to have been even decently civil to, for fear of contamination to the polished manners of my own children."

Thus reasoned the refined and stately Countess of Castle Coombe upon our poor heroine, while Lady Charlotte declared she liked her looks extremely, and it was the only thing which had yet reconciled her to the idea of passing so many months in that gloomy

Castle ; and her sister as usual whatever might have been her thoughts upon the subject, said nothing.

"Are you come to talk Italian with me Miss Fitzallan? How kind," said Lady Charlotte, as Amy entered the school-room on the following morning, in obedience to the request of the Countess.

"Yes if you are quite at leisure, and I should so like you to tell me all about Italy in return," said Amy, won by her frank and friendly greeting.

"You have never been in Italy then?"

"No, only in my dreams!"

"And did you learn its language then?" asked Lady Charlotte archly.

Amy laughed, and shook her head.

"But are its skies really so blue and bright as we read in poetry?" asked she after a pause.

"Shall I answer Miss Fitzallan in the words which I heard Mr. Trevallion make use of, the

night before we started for England?" enquired Lady Charlotte glancing at her sister, "Eh Anne?"

"I do not know to what you allude," replied the other without looking off her book.

"Oh! perhaps you did not hear it, and yet I fancied you coloured, but then there is never any understanding you. However it is worth repeating—'The skies of Italy,' he said, 'were as calmly blue, although not half as bright as the eyes of the gentle Lady Anne Dunorven.'"

Amy wondered if they were also as cold, but had the prudence to keep the idea to herself.

"One seems privileged to talk folly in Italy, and by moonlight," said Lady Anne briefly.

"And yet I do not remember the climate, or the moon either having that effect on you; indeed upon the night in question, I do not think you once opened your lips, unless it was to complain of being chilly, and banish us all within doors a full hour before the usual

time, for which Dunorven for one gave you his blessing. Ah! my merry brother, how I wish you were with us again! But here am I talking vulgar English again, instead of availing myself of Miss Fitzallan's kind assistance in mastering the silvery accents of the sweet South! Bye the bye, I wonder what language expresses the most in the fewest words; you must find this out for me Miss Maxwell, and it will be a good study for Anne."

"And you too, sometimes," replied her governess in a tone of mild reproach.

"Yes I know I am almost as bad the other way, but then I have to talk for both of us, and for the honour of the family."

"Lord Dunorven will save you some trouble in that respect, when he returns," said Miss Maxwell.

"Yes I hope so; and now to business."

"I should like to share in the benefit of your instructions Miss Fitzallan, if you will allow

me," said Lady Anne, whose low musical voice seemed indeed well suited to the language which she desired to perfect herself in. And it was so seldom that her eldest pupil evinced the slightest wish for improvement or instruction, which considering how highly accomplished she was, seemed almost to have come to her by intuition, as it were, that even Miss Maxwell opened her small eyes in unfeigned astonishment. And the more so when she saw that Lady Anne was really in earnest, and sincere in the wish she had expressed ; and actually spoke more Italian with Amy in that one morning, than she had heard her utter in any other language for the last fortnight. No wonder she should be languid and weary after so unusual an exertion, and lay dosing on the sofa in a sort of dreamy reverie for hours afterwards, until aroused at length to undergo what seemed to her the unnecessary fatigue of dressing for dinner.

Amy walked over to the Rectory that even-

ing in an unusually bright mood, things had turned out a thousand times better than she expected they would have done, and already with the natural aptitude of youth to form new and sudden friendships and affections she felt more than half inclined to love Lady Charlotte dearly, while her statue-like sister, as she called her, both amused and puzzled her.

Mr. Alleyne had missed her more than he cared to confess, and his warm greeting told Amy how much she was beloved.

"Now I am come to be praised," said she, "for keeping my word with you, and being very, very good!"

"And I am ready not only to praise, but reward you too."

"Ah! you have had a letter from Cecil! I was sure of it, for it always makes you look ten years younger all the day afterwards. But what does he say? Is he well? Will he come back soon?"

"You may read it if you will, which will save me the trouble of answering your thousand and one questions, all crowded into a breath."

The girl opened the paper eagerly, glancing first at the bottom of the sheet, where, in his epistles to his grandfather, was sure to be transcribed his dear love and remembrances to Amy. Oh ! how well she knew the exact spot and corner, and took so long in reading these few words, which she must have known by heart by this time, that Mr. Alleyne could not help asking archly, if she were reading it backwards like a charm.

Amy coloured, and beginning this time at the right end, was soon completely absorbed in its contents, while the old man sat and watched her changeful countenance with a pleased and tranquil smile.

"How these children love one another," thought he. "Heaven send that no eloud

may ever come between them and their present innocent affection, and that I may live to witness their happiness ! And yet how Dods-worth would laugh at me for dreaming thus."

" Poor Cecil ! he must study very hard," said Amy, laying down the letter at length.

" And yet he does not complain, but talks cheerfully and hopefully of the bright future, which he will yet carve out by his own talents and unwearied industry."

" A lesson for me," said Amy frankly, " not to murmur at my little trials and afflictions, but bear all nobly as he does, and with the same end in view,—our happy re-union at last."

" I had a letter by the same post from Mr. Drummond, the solicitor, with whom he is now staying, a cousin of his father's," continued Mr. Alleyne, " and he tells me that Cecil's eloquence is absolutely wonderful, and his reasoning powers strong, and finely developed ; predicting for him a rising and brilliant career."

"Ah! he was always eloquent," said Amy simply "and had the method of winning one into doing and thinking just what he pleased."

"And did he teach you that my child, along with all your other accomplishments?" asked the good rector, laying his head caressingly upon her glossy curls, "I sometimes think so."

"I wish he had, not that I care to practise it upon you, for somehow it is far pleasanter to obey than argue with those we love. But I should like to try my power occasionally up at the Castle."

"All power is dangerous," said Mr. Alleyne.

"But sweet, nevertheless," persisted Amy.

"And who would you wish to exercise this persuasive eloquence on?"

"Oh! the Countess I think, she seems the most impassable. Or the beautiful and passionless Lady Anne Dunorven, at least if I could persuade myself that she was worth the trouble."

"Nay, you must not learn to be satirical Amy."

"Was I satirical? I thought I might say what I liked to you."

"Nevertheless it is getting into a bad habit which you might hereafter find it difficult to break through. And of all faults in a woman, satire has always seemed to me the most odious and inexcusable: and can only be palliated when, as we too often find it to be the case, it is the last resort of a wounded and disappointed spirit, at enmity with itself and the whole world."

"That is, in other words then, in an old maid; I hope I shall never be an old maid, grandpapa!"

"The rector could not help laughing at the seriousness with which she spoke of an event which did not seem, in his own mind, very likely ever to come to pass."

"I hope," said he, "that you will learn to be contented in whatever situation it may be the will of Providence to place you."

"Yes, that is the great thing after all, dear grandpapa! I do not know how it is," con-

tinued the girl, as they sat together in the fading twilight, still conversing on the thousand subjects which come so naturally when we talk with those we love, "but I always feel happier and better for being with you."

"But are you sure that Cecil's letter has had nothing to do with this on the present occasion?"

"No indeed, for it has made me seem quite brave to bear all my little troubles for his sake while he is toiling so hard for us."

It will be your turn to have the next letter," said Mr. Alleyne smiling fondly on her, "but I suppose I must not ask to read it all through, as you have done mine."

"Ah! yes you may—why not? We have no secrets from you dear grandpapa!"

"And never will have I hope. But you must leave me now for it is growing late."

"Yes, and it is as much as my life is worth to be seen running, I suppose, even although I should stand the chance of being benighted; and must be careful besides of my growing reputation for steadiness. I think I shall take

lessons in deportment from Lady Anne, in return for my affording her instructions in Italian."

"She is very graceful certainly," replied Mr. Alleyne, scarcely able to repress a smile at Amy's simplicity in talking thus of an Earl's daughter; and secretly wondering what the stately Countess would say and think, were she to hear her.

"Yes very, and now good night!" said Amy, stooping to kiss his withered brow, and stealing another look as she did so at the letter which still lay open before him. That is at that certain magical corner of it before mentioned, kept ever sacred to some kind message or remembrance of herself. After which she turned away, and walked home slowly and gravely enough to have pleased even Mrs. Jelf, had she been by; but with a heart full of glad and happy thoughts.

THE GRANDFATHER.

A NOVEL.

BY THE LATE MISS ELLEN PICKERING.

AUTHOR OF

"Nan Darrell," "The Fright," "The Grumbler," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I.

TIME passed rapidly on at Castle Coombe, but without working much of change in the relative positions of our dramatis personæ, only that Amy's proper position in the household seemed more clearly defined, and it was certainly to be no longer a menial one. She shared the instructions of Miss Maxwell, in music, with her other pupils, communicating in return her own knowledge of the Italian and German lan-

guages, at least as far as she had any encouragement to do so; for Lady Anne never could manage to pronounce the somewhat harsh and guttural accents of the latter, and was indeed so completely engaged in the study of the former, as to have no time to spare for any thing else. And Lady Charlotte found both equally tedious and difficult. Even the Countess herself had once or twice condescended to give Amy some hints, as she had promised, with regard to the proper management of her really sweet and flexible voice, at which time the girl's unfeigned and enthusiastic admiration of the brilliant powers of her instructress, were not entirely without their effect.

It had become quite a matter of course for Amy to dine with the family, except when, as she often preferred to do, she took her simple meal with the kind old rector, to whom she owed so much. And not only was she treated by Lady Charlotte with the affection of a

sister, but even Lady Anne evinced a quiet courtesy, somewhat at variance with her usual cold and haughty deportment towards those whom she considered to be her inferiors in birth and station ; indeed it was this latter circumstance which tended much to propitiate the Countess, who often suffered herself to take the tone of her likes and dislikes from her equally proud and aristocratic daughter.

Amy was surprised and pleased, as it was but natural that she should be, at the way things had turned out, so differently from what she had expected and feared. But she grew not proud nevertheless at her new elevation, but was always at hand to assist Mrs. Jelf, (much the proudest of the two by the bye, for she had a pleasant habit of taking credit to herself on all occasions concerning Amy, for the manner in which she had brought her up,) in any difficulty which might require the aid of a lighter or more tasteful fancy than the good housekeeper was conscious of possessing. And

although it was no longer her office, as it had once been, to arrange the flower vases in her ladyship's boudoir, Amy still cheerfully undertook it as a labour of love. Her music and embroidery had not rendered her a bit less skilful in making jellies and preserves, or her constant association with the ladies of Castle Coombe, caused her to forget to drop in occasionally upon good Mrs. Marsh, to take tea out of her own splendid gift. And never surely did a cup of tea taste so sweetly to Amy. And then she used to gladden Jem's heart by praising the flowers he still continued to bring her, above all the grand exotics in the conservatory up at the castle, and delight his mother by the relish with which she still eat and enjoyed her favorite cakes. And even Martha came in as usual for the kind smile, without which, as she once said in the genuine poetry of her simple and grateful heart—

“ It seemed as if the sun had forgotten to shine.”

Neither did Amy neglect her duties as

deputy librarian to her good old friend the rector, and many were the long hours they spent together among his favorite books, in which each grew all the wiser and better for their studies. The old man sustained by his own thirst after knowledge, and the young girl encouraged by the hope that Cecil would find her improved, and have no cause on his return to feel ashamed of his little playfellow. And there is no fear of a woman's ever becoming too learned when she seeks improvement only in this loveful spirit, and with a view to please and gratify others rather than her own vanity or love of display. We do not indeed believe in the existence of this latter feeling. Or if occasionally forced upon our notice in society, are more inclined to pity them for the cause, (for be sure there is always some cause,) than to hate them for the effect.

Sometimes Lady Charlotte got leave to go with Amy to the rectory, who would point out to her all her favorite walks, and her summer

seat by the edge of the sunny lake, or the "Rector's bower," as she called it, which it was her own peculiar task to keep green and bright, and twine with all the loveliest flowers of the season, and where she used to bid him sit and think of her when she was away. And her birds, so tame that they came forth at the sound of her voice, and sat upon her shoulder, or nestled in her bosom, or among her long hair. But never once did Amy mention the name of Cecil, a sort of natural instinct making her feel that Lady Charlotte, with all her good nature and kind temper, was not exactly the sort of person of whom one would wish to make a confidante. How rarely indeed do we find such even among our dearest friends. Once, or twice perhaps, in a life time, seldom more, but then how we prize them.

Lady Charlotte, however, had no reserves from her companion, and nothing Amy liked better than to sit and listen to her descriptions of Italy, the land of her own youthful idolatry.

And even got in time quite to love that kind brother whom she was never weary of praising.

“And is he really never out of temper?” asked she one day, when the affectionate sister had been descanting as usual upon her favorite theme.

“Oh, yes very—that is, not very frequently. But then Dunorven has a good excuse for being sometimes a little cross and irritable, in the pain which his foot often gives him, and the sad consciousness of an incurable lameness, so galling to a young and handsome man.”

“I remember now hearing your mamma once allude to some accident which he met with years ago, I think she said,” observed Amy.

“Yes, when he was quite a boy, in endeavouring to save a child, who, escaping from her nursery-maid, had bounded heedlessly into the road, and was in imminent danger of being run

over, had not my brother snatched her up in his arms. He could not however escape in time to prevent the ponderous vehicle from crushing his own foot and leg in a most frightful manner. Of course I can remember nothing about it myself, but I have heard say that it was perfectly fearful to witness the grief and agony of my poor mamma, who I verily believe likes him better than all the rest of us put together; and beautiful to mark Dunorven's patience, and the heroic fortitude with which he repressed every cry of pain, for fear of adding to her sufferings. It must have been a terrible suspense for both the few weeks that followed, during which the first physicians in England were called in and consulted; and it was agreed at length that he need not lose his leg, but only consent to keep very quiet for months, perhaps for years, and that he could never hope to get entirely better of the accident all his life."

"That was sad indeed," said Amy.

"But you have not asked what became of the little girl whom he saved."

"No, I had forgotten her. No doubt her parents were very grateful, as well as very sorry for what had happened."

"To be sure, and I am quite angry with Dunorven, for not finishing the romance as he ought, by falling in love with the fair heroine, whose life he had preserved at the risk of his own; and who might have made up by her love and tenderness for all that suffering and privation of which she is the innocent cause."

"Have they ever met since?" asked Amy, who was, perhaps, somewhat of Lady Charlotte's way of thinking.

"Yes, she was staying at Milan at the same time we were, and I remember thinking her very cold and haughty at first, and so did Dunorven too, but afterwards, when we met in Switzerland, I altered my opinion, although he never did, and always avoided encountering her when he possibly could."

“ And what made you think her less cold ?” enquired Amy.

“ Oh ! I changed my mind one day when we all went out together to see some magnificent view of the lake of Geneva, which had been much vaunted, and was best seen from the summit of a certain high mountain, up the side of which our little party bounded with light and joyous steps, I among the number, forgetting, as I am so apt to do, with all my love for Dunorven, that he cannot climb. All but Miss St. Aubyn, who still lingered until my brother, who had no mind for her society, flinging himself carelessly upon the grass, begged that he might not detain her. And then it seems the poor girl burst into tears, and cried and sobbed like a child, begging him to forgive her for all that she had made him suffer, and not hate her as she hated herself, every time she looked at him. Of course my good brother said all that was kind, and gentle, and soothing, and succeeded at length in hushing her wild

grief; but they never met again. He was careful, he used to tell us, to spare her that pain; but I have often doubted whether Miss St. Aubyn felt pleased or grateful for his studied avoidance, although meant in kindness."

"Poor girl!" said Amy compassionately, "after all it was no fault of hers."

"Certainly not, and Dunorven would have been the last person to have thought so, who never imagines evil of any one. He was very far from hating, but on the contrary, pitied her very much; and used to say that he was proud of having preserved such a pretty little creature by the mere sacrifice of a foot, as who could help being? But then he had no inclination to avail himself of all the enviable and peculiar advantages of his position, or I do think he would not have found the proud and beautiful heiress, courted and admired as she was, very difficult to be wooed and won."

"Ah! I can fancy her liking him very much, as we always must do those to whom we

feel grateful, and more especially those who have suffered for us," said Amy.

"I can see you would have turned out a heroine quite after my own heart," observed Lady Charlotte laughingly; "and then Dunorven could not have helped loving you, like all the rest of us, even down, or rather up to good, stiff, prim Mrs. Jelf! Even my grave sister Anne is a little thawed in the presence of your sunny smile, and mamma positively civil; while Miss Maxwell holds you up as a bright example of perfection, before the eyes of a certain wilful pupil; and Mr. Alleyne, dear simple man! thinks, I do verily believe, that there is not your equal in the whole world!"

"Is he simple on that account?" asked Amy archly.

"No indeed; but pray tell me if I have left out any of your admirers?"

"Oh! yes, there is Jem, the gardener's boy—and Mrs. Marsh, the baker's wife—and Martha, the under-housemaid—and—" Amy

paused, but she did not add any other name ; it would have been a shame to have placed that of Cecil at the end of the list.

“ Hold ! ” interrupted Lady Charlotte, “ I stand convicted of speaking as usual on a subject far beyond my comprehension ; and yet I would fain learn from you the art of attaining to this great popularity.”

“ Nay, I think it must come naturally—or else every one loves me, because I love every one,” added Amy, unconsciously quoting the simple and truthful words spoken years before by a young child, from out of the depths of its clear, innocent spirit. And so it ever is, for the most part, the *loving* are the *beloved* !

CHAPTER II.

"A LETTER for Miss Amy," said Martha, entering the school-room one morning with her bright face glowing with happiness, and stepping out of her usual department on purpose that she might have the pleasure of presenting it herself; a breach of discipline for which Mrs. Jelf forgot to chide her on recognizing the London post mark, and was even guilty of a similar one in lingering for a moment at the

door to see by Amy's countenance that it contained no bad news.

"Oh! thank you, Martha—a thousand thanks!" exclaimed the delighted girl, pressing it to her lips in her thoughtless joy; while Lady Charlotte laughed less at the action itself; than the good housekeeper's look of blank horror and amazement.

Amy coloured a little, and in answer to their enquiring glances, said excusingly, that it was from her brother, which of course only made matters worse.

"Why I did not know you had a brother, Miss Fitzallan," said the simple Miss Maxwell.

"No, no more she has, Miss," said Mrs. Jelf coming to Amy's assistance at this critical moment, although, by the bye, it was more than she deserved; "but you see that she and Cecil, Mr. Grey, I mean, the rector's grandson, were brought up together from quite children,

and have got into a foolish habit of calling one another brother and sister."

" Ah! foolish indeed, but you never told me about that, Amy. And so he writes to you. Does he begin with ' my dear sister?'" asked the lively Lady Charlotte, peeping over the shoulder of her companion, who had already grown oblivious to all around her, and was meditating a fresh attack on the nerves of poor Mrs. Jelf, by suddenly starting up, and clapping her hands joyfully together.

" Miss Fitzallan," began the housekeeper reproachfully. But Amy's first pleading word put all the intended lecture out of her head.

" He is coming back to stay a whole week perhaps! Are you not glad?"

" Yes indeed, and so will Mr. Alleyne be."

" Ah! I long to tell him the good news!"

" I for one will excuse your lessons for this morning," said Lady Charlotte half indolently, and half in good natured sympathy with her impatience.

"No, no, I can see by Mrs. Jelf's countenance that I have been very naughty, and deserve to be punished; so I will summons up moral courage enough to punish myself by remaining quietly at my studies, until the usual hour of his reaching the library. And in return for this glorious self denial, shall expect a free pardon for all past offences."

"You are indeed a sad, wild girl! and I much fear incorrigible," said the stately housekeeper, with difficulty preserving the gravity she thought due and decorous in the presence of the ladies of Castle Coombe.

"No, not incorrigible, dear Jelfy!" exclaimed Amy, her spirits unusually elated at the prospect of so soon meeting Cecil again. "Do not give me up yet," and she flung her arms about the old lady's neck, and gave vent to the exuberance of her joy in a fond and playful kiss.

"My gracious!" said the housekeeper, turning actually a shade paler, as she adjusted her

cap and frill, and moved away as fast as was at all consistent with her peculiar notions of a graceful and dignified deportment. "What would the Countess say?"

Lady Charlotte laughed aloud, while even Miss Maxwell herself could scarcely avoid joining in her noisy mirth. And the Lady Anne lifted up her large, languid eyes from the book she was reading, with a bewildered and enquiring glance, as though she would have asked what it was all about, but finding it too much trouble, or not being sufficiently interested in the parties concerned, let them fall again, and quietly resumed her studies.

Never seemed those slow and gentle tones less musical to the ear of the impatient Amy, than on that morning, as they dwelt lingeringly on the rich accents of the language in which she had already made such progress, while Lady Charlotte's usual careless inattention was equally provoking. But when it came to her own turn to practise singing and music with

Miss Maxwell, she felt what little right she had to find fault with others, and made more blunders in her time and notes, than even Charlotte herself, had previously done in grammar and pronunciation, thereby severely trying the patience and good humour of the kind-hearted governess, which fortunately for all her pupils seemed exhaustless.

“Thank you,” said Amy, as she arose at length, pushing away the music-stool, and closing her books for the day with great glee. “Thank you very much for the gentleness with which you have borne all my idleness and want of attention. To-morrow you shall see that I will be quite good again.”

“Ah! that to-morrow which never comes,” said Miss Maxwell with a smile.

“But it shall come this time.”

“One moment, Amy,” said Lady Charlotte, laying her hand detainingly upon that of the retreating girl, who was already in the act of

departing. "I want you to tell me the Italian of this one word."

"Well, what is it that you wish to know?"

"The term used in that language for brother, my dear Miss Fitzallan," replied her companion archly.

Amy closed the door hastily, and went laughing and bounding along the hall, towards the grand staircase leading to the library, where she expected to find the rector, in a manner that would have astonished Mrs. Jelf, even more than it did her stately mistress, who chanced to be also passing that way. Her cold, good morning was the first intimation which Amy received of the presence of the Countess, and as she afterwards told Mr. Alleyne, she felt herself gradually stiffening, as though there was a strange power in those proud, keen eyes to turn the gazer into stone.

"You have been either giving or receiving a dancing lesson I presume," said her ladyship coldly.

Amy shook her head, and tried to keep down the rebellious corners of her dimpling mouth, which would be perpetually breaking forth into smiles, the natural tokens of a heart full, to overflowing, with innocent joy.

"I merely concluded so by the manner in which you pirouetted across the hall just now."

"Did I pirouette?" said the girl simply, and feeling as if at the present moment she should have very little difficulty in flying over any thing.

These ideal wings belong only to the season of early youth, and droop all too soon, so that as we grow older we come nearer and nearer to the earth, treading, ah, how wearily at times, those thorny places of life which in earlier years we were wont to flit over like a bird.

"Shall we see you at dinner?" said the Countess after a pause, and in a more gracious tone, fancying from the girl's demure attitude, and downcast eyes, that the proper impression

had been made, and she was not likely to again offend by that over buoyancy of spirit so much at variance with her strict ideas of dignity and propriety.

“Not if your ladyship will excuse me,” replied Amy, dreading perhaps a lecture in reserve, and more than ever anxious for a quiet *tête-à-tête* with her old friend. “I have promised Mr. Alleyne to return with him.”

“Be it so then,” said the Countess, “you owe the good rector much for his early care and attention to you, and I should be sorry at any time to interfere with that proper and dutiful affection to which he is so justly entitled.”

Amy cortesied in silence, and thought within herself, as she watched her sweep gracefully past, that it was a marvel good Mrs. Jelf was not ten times more strict and prim, than was in reality the case, if that were possible, which we are half inclined to doubt; and wondered how Lady Charlotte could possibly have

escaped the influence of such an ultra refined school of manners.

Mr. Alleyne was seated as usual in his favorite corner of the library, and so engrossed in his studies as not even to notice her entrance, until she actually came and seated herself upon the low stool at his feet, looking up so gladly into his face with her laughing eyes, that he guessed at once something more than commonly pleasant had occurred, and that that something must necessarily relate to Cecil.

"Your turn has come already," said he, "and you have got a letter. Remember your promise, Amy, that I am to see it."

"Yes, bye and bye, dear grandpapa! But I have better news still."

"He is coming back then—soon—perhaps to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow, and for a whole week, which will not be half long enough for all that we shall have to hear and tell one another.

May I ask the Countess to spare me for that time, and spend it all with you and him?" she added coaxingly.

"I think not," replied the rector after a moment's thought, "it may look strange, perhaps." Simple enough he was, heaven knows, and yet not quite so simple as our young heroine.

"What may look strange?" asked Amy impatiently. "She must know how we love one another. And what a world of news he must have to tell me after so long an absence."

"Well, we will see about it, so smile again dear child! And at least I will ask her myself to spare you all day to-morrow."

"Oh, that it were come! I wonder if Cecil is equally impatient."

"Most probably not, you forget that he is no longer a boy now, but a grave and learned man, as Mrs. Jelf prophesied he would be."

"But do you think he is really so very much altered?" asked Amy anxiously.

"Not in heart at least; I am sure of that."

"And that is all that signifies. He may be as grand, and learned, and eloquent to all others as he likes, so he is unchanged to me, which I am sure he will be. And yet I do not think we shall find him very grave either, for read his letter, grandpapa, wherein he mentions all the indispensables which he shall expect to find to welcome his return. Some of Mrs. Jelf's best preserved ginger, and raspberry jam, which I must not forget to mention ere we return, since it will put her in high good humour with me again. A good supply of 'Amy's cakes,' as he used to call them, from Mrs. Marsh, which we will step into the village and order as we go home; and something else, that I am not so sure he will get," added the girl, laughing and colouring slightly,

as she laid her hand playfully over the paragraph in question, although the old man was not slow in guessing its purport.

"Nay, nothing must be wanting on that day," said he, "and now you have quite spoiled my morning's work with your good news, and merry face."

"If it had only been half as long to you as it has seemed to me," observed Amy, "you would not very much regret that. Here have I been sitting with the patience of a martyr, ever since post-time, burning to meet with some one to whom I could explain my happiness, and feeling as if it would have been the greatest possible relief to have flung my book at the head of the Lady Anne, for looking so calmly placid, or her sister for laughing so immoderately at nothing at all."

"Nay, Amy, you must learn to get the better of these silly freaks of temper, and remember that you are now no longer a child."

"Yes, I know it is very foolish, dear grandpapa, to use the very gentlest word possible. But you shall see how good and steady I mean to be when Cecil comes back."

"Ah, seeing is believing," said Mr. Alleyne, "and now I will go and get *carte blanche* for a day's absence from the Countess."

"Only a day, dear grandpapa."

"Well, a day to begin with, and Cecil may come and beg for the rest himself, if he wants the plague of you."

"Now you are growing saucy and independent," said Amy laughingly, and holding up her finger in playful threatening, "thinking you will be able to do without me for a while, but remember, that when he is gone you will be left entirely to my mercy again!"

"And what methods do you mean to take to bring me to a sense of my injustice?" asked the good humoured old man.

"Never once coming near you all day long for a whole week!"

"And who will be the greatest sufferer by this, Amy, do you think?"

"Now, I declare, as Mrs. Jelf told me only this morning, you are growing quite incorrigible! I must take advice from Cecil on the subject. But seriously, my dear grandpapa! will you go now and prefer your petition, while I make all things tidy in furtherance of my duty as sub-librarian, which has hitherto been a mere honorary office."

"Suppose she should refuse," thought the girl, with that happy art of self-tormenting which we are all so apt occasionally to indulge in. "And it would be just like her. And yet she promised never to keep me from Mr. Alleyne, and is more civil to him than any one that I ever saw her speak to. I hope he will not say too much about Cecil, for fear she should take some such notion in her head, as poor dear Mrs. Jelf used occasionally to utter, about its being improper our being so much

together. And I do think that I should positively run away, were she to refuse me permission to go decorously. Well, dear grand-papa !” exclaimed the girl, springing off the top of the step-ladder upon his entrance, at the risk of her neck ; “but I see by your smile that it is all right, and I may go.”

“ Yes, the Countess has not only consented to spare you all to-morrow, but included Cecil in a general invitation for the following day, to dine and spend the evening here.”

“ For which Cecil will not thank her, or I either ; for we would a thousand times rather be roaming together through all our old haunts.”

“ Nevertheless, I have accepted it in the same kind spirit in which it was offered, and shall be proud to introduce my grandson to her Ladyship.”

“ How selfish I am !” said Amy in a self-upbraiding tone.

“ No dearest ! only thoughtless. And now that you have reduced all things so nicely to order, we will take our departure.”

Amy did not forget to apprise Mrs. Jelf of what was expected from her, who was duly proud and pleased with Cecil's remembrance, and faithfully promised that nothing should be wanting, on her part at least, in the shape of a sweet welcome, while Mrs. Marsh set about the immediate preparation of her cakes, in a flutter of delight at the young gentleman's condescension, as she termed it ; so that Amy's only fear was, lest in her over anxiety to make them better than usual, the whole batch should be spoiled, a suspicion which turned out in the end to be utterly groundless. Then there was the vases to fill with his favourite flowers. The bower where he used to love to sit, to be put in order. And Amy could not forbear taking a solitary peep at the little lake, which was so soon once again to reflect upon its bosom

another face beside her own, as in old times, and even fancied that it went smiling and rippling along in the fading sunlight, as though it were rejoicing in her bright anticipations of happiness.

And when it grew too late to be out of doors, and the rector had sank quietly into his usual after dinner nap, she took down all the books which they had used to peruse together, one after the other, reading only here and there a penciled passage, or where the page had been turned down, or a leaf or flower inserted, to mark some favourite place. Sometimes pausing to wonder whether he thought now exactly as he had done then. She was sure that she did ; but then women have less temptation to change, and in general take the hue and colour of their views and opinions from others. At least the wisest and happiest of them do, as indeed, it is but natural that they should. And when Mr. Alleyne woke up at length, she practised all Cecil's favourite songs, with a dozen new

ones, learned of the ladies of Castle Coombe, which she was sure he would like because she did; concluding the evening with their mingled and earnest prayers that no accident might hinder the speedy return of him, whom they so loved, to his home.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was no sleep that night for Amy, or if she did, for a few moments at a time, it was only to dream that Cecil had come back, and wake up with a vague feeling of disappointment to find how many hours must elapse before that could possibly come to pass. It was something however to have the arrangement of their late breakfast to look to, the flowers, the creams, the cakes, everything that he had loved when a

boy, even his favorite seat, next to hers of course, was placed ready for him as usual. Then it took an extra ten minutes to arrange every glossy ringlet just as he had loved to see her wear them, and set to rights one of the neatest and prettiest little morning gowns imaginable, white, because Cecil liked her best in white. Although a few moments afterwards half her work was disarranged at once by the bounding step with which she flew down the garden, having no fear of the Countess, or Mrs. Jelf, before her eyes, at the fancied sound of an approaching vehicle; and it was only fancy after all.

“ I told you that he could not possibly be here yet, for this half hour,” said Mr. Alleyne, who sat as usual with a book in his hands, although we will not pretend to say how much he read of it. But it is certain as we grow older we take these sort of things much more quietly, these brief partings and joyful meetings, which form the epochs of young lives.

And yet the good old man was not quite as calm and collected as usual either.

"A whole half hour!" repeated Amy impatiently, "I think your watch must be too slow."

"It is right by the church clock; but I fancy it is the coach which is too slow this morning, my child!"

"I wish they would have a railway to Castle Coombe," said the girl, walking to the window.

"I thought you promised to be very good and patient all to-day?" observed the rector.

"Yes, so I did, when Cecil came back, if you recollect, so I may make myself as disagreeable as I please until then, may I not?"

"If you can," replied her companion fondly.

"Hush! dear Grandpapa! What was that? No it has passed on. I will just walk a little way up the garden, and watch, like sister Anne, in Blue Beard, for the cloud of dust."

Long did Amy watch and wait; aye even

until the very minute, when, had she been wise, she might have began her vigil, but who ever could be wise while anxiously expecting the return of a beloved object? Or give heed to ought but their own eager and impatient longings? Or when did time or stage coaches abate one iota of their stern and regular punctuality on our account? At length, however, her glad tones broke upon the ear of Mr. Alleyne.

“Now, now! Grandpapa! I see them galloping!” While instead of flying forth to meet him, as she had intended up to the last moment, Amy, with a strange and unaccountable feeling of bashfulness, retreated into the house, and crept timidly to the side of Mr. Alleyne.

After a brief interval, the hasty tread of approaching footsteps was heard coming up the gravel path, and Cecil Grey once more stood with a flushed cheek and sparkling eyes in his early home. That home which he had left so short a time before, a hopeful boy, and now re-

turned to with something of that natural and manly pride, which sits so well on those who have deserved to possess the feeling.

“What no one to meet and greet me upon the threshold?” said he, affectionately pressing the withered hand of his venerable relative. “Amy, how was this?” And as he turned towards her, the girl shrank back instinctively.

“Nay, you must not think us cold, Cecil, for Amy has been up, and looking out for you ever since the dawn, although she ran away at last, just at the very moment. I do believe the silly child is afraid of you.”

“Is it so, dearest?” asked his grandson in a low voice.

“No, no, forgive me, I am very foolish!” said Amy colouring, and holding out her hand instead of holding up her cheek, as her old play-fellow seemed to think, by his looks, would have been no more than natural. “But you really are so grown—so altered.”

“Only in appearance, Amy.”

"Yes, I might have been sure of that. But are you certain that you are quite well with these pale cheeks?"

"The inevitable result of over much study, and perhaps the want of a little country air; but you will see me look quite blooming before I leave you."

"I hope so," said the rector, gazing proudly upon the strikingly handsome face and figure of his nephew. "And now make breakfast, dear child! for I am sure that Cecil must be starved."

"Almost, I confess."

"See, there is everything that you stipulated for, preserved ginger and all."

"No not quite everything," said Cecil, glancing at Amy, who was trying all she could to mind what she was about.

The old man caught the look and laughed.

"You forget," said he, "that our Amy is no longer a child, to give away her kisses unasked."

"But I did ask."

"You demanded as a right, what you must learn to solicit as a favour," said Mr. Alleyne with a smile.

"In that case I most humbly plead for pardon!" exclaimed Cecil, dropping upon his knees before the confused girl, with an assumed playfulness which could not entirely conceal a deeper feeling. "How long do you condemn me to do penance for my offence, Amy?"

"I suppose I must forgive it this once," replied she in the same tone, "since you are so very, very hungry!" And as she bent timidly towards him to receive the kiss of peace, as Cecil called it, both felt that she was indeed no longer a child.

And now he has taken his seat beside her, and they are chatting merrily together as of old. Amy feels quite glad when he turns away to converse with his grandfather, because she can then look at him unobserved. And

how proud she is of him, thinking, as well she might, that there can scarcely be his equal in the whole world! How eloquently, as it seems to that simple girl, does the future barrister discourse upon every theme. How wise he has grown in matters of which she knows nothing, not even the name. How should she? for what has a woman to do with politics? What a light seems to shine upon his high, intellectual brow, and in his dark earnest eyes. And what a brilliant smile is perpetually flitting over his somewhat haughty lip. And now that she is used to it, she thinks that he looks all the better for being pale, or at least, a thousand times more intellectual, and so there gradually blends with her former love for him, that deep reverence which forms the firmest bond of union between the sexes. A man may love, and far oftener than not, does love one beneath him in point of intellect. But it seems as natural for a woman to look up to the object of her affec-

tion, as the flower to the moon—the glow-worm to the star—or any other pretty and poetical image which may occur to the memory or imagination of our gentle readers.

There is no saying but what that morning meal might have been prolonged even until mid-day but for the rector, who had his usual duties to attend to, and the young people were left to amuse themselves for the next few hours after their own fashion.

“Let us go down to the lake,” said Cecil, “and look at ourselves as we did when I first left Castle Coombe. Have you ever thought of that since, Amy?”

“Oh, yes, it was but last night that I went there all alone, and half fearful lest you might have forgotten all about it.”

“We were both to blame then it seems, for our foolish doubts, and must promise never to entertain such again.”

“I do not think that I ever really did in my heart,” said Amy ingenuously.

“ And you never will, dearest ? ”

Cecil did not say dear sister as of old, and Amy's heightened color shewed that she marked the difference. Silly Amy, she felt at first almost disappointed at the omission of this cherished term of endearment, and felt somewhat awkward and embarrassed at the change ; but nevertheless she could answer this question frankly enough.

“ Never, never, I hope ! ”

And now once again they stood side by side, looking into the stream, until Cecil turned from it to gaze more earnestly than he had yet done, into the bright face of his companion.

“ Why how beautiful you have grown, Amy ! ”

“ Ah ! you must not say that, or Mrs. Jelf will scold,” said the girl, with something of her former archness.

“ But I must and will, and you may put up your saucy lip, and shake back your curls if you like, as though well aware of the fact.”

"Oh! I hope you too do not think me vain," said Amy, more earnestly than the subject seemed to demand. "Indeed, indeed, I only wished for beauty that you and dear Mr. Alleyne might be proud of me, and love me all the more."

"And so we are, my Amy!" replied Cecil, gratified by her simple and candid admission. "But cannot be more fond, because we love you so very much already."

"You too are changed," said the girl after a pause.

"For the better of course, so I will save you the trouble of searching for a compliment. But was it this exuberant head of hair, or my gigantic height, which frightened you so this morning?"

"Neither, but—but I believe I was very, very foolish."

"Foolish indeed to be afraid of your old playfellow. But you do not fear me now?"

"No not here. It seems like old times come again, and I forget how wise and learned you have grown, while I am yet a silly child!"

"No, a beautiful woman!" said Cecil, gazing upon her with undisguised admiration.

"It is part of your profession to flatter, is it not?" asked Amy, blushing and laughing under his earnest scrutiny.

"No, but I am learning to plead," replied her companion in a low voice.

"And what is that?" asked Amy, with a simplicity which somewhat disconcerted the young lover. "Nay you must put up with my ignorance Cecil."

"Why it would be just as reasonable to expect you to understand all our law terms, as that I should know how to make tarts and custards, as well as you and Mrs. Jelf. But why Cecil only, and not dear Cecil! as of old? Or have I grown less dear?"

"Ah! you know that without my answering

you," replied the girl, casting down her eyes, "so I suppose I thought that there was no use in always repeating it."

"Then it is to be understood on all future occasions, whether expressed or not?" said the young lawyer, "that is henceforth a settled point?"

"Yes, if you do not tease me into withdrawing from the agreement," said Amy gaily, while she carefully avoided meeting his eyes.

"Then I will be very good for fear of such a punishment. But let us walk on for the air is somewhat chilly."

Amy acquiesced, and yet she still lingered, and gazed wistfully into the lake, for there was a wild foreboding fear at her heart, such as is ever apt to steal over us in our most blissful moments, that we may never be quite so happy again; the little cloud which one sees afar off, so very, very long before the tempest bursts, and which after all is just as likely to flit harm-

lessly by without coming to anything in the end, save it may be a summer shower.

She was ashamed to confess this causeless feeling of sadness to her companion, or cared not perhaps, to throw a gloom over the joy of their meeting; and they walked on together for a few moments in silence. They who had so much to tell, so much to listen to, so that a week, or even a month would have seemed all too short in the which to give it utterance. But it is always so. How seldom when dear friends meet, is one half spoken which they had meant to say to each other. The real truth is that we are too happy at such times for words, and think afterwards with a vain regret of how much there has been left unsaid.

Amy showed him his bower, looking as green and bright as when he quitted it, and the old tree where he had made a notch in the rough bark to signify her height, a mark which

now scarcely reached to her shoulder. And another with their names somewhat rudely carved upon it; and they gradually began to recal all their childish sports, and pastimes, and scrapes, in most of which Cecil so cheerfully bore the blame, although not always the greatest culprit, for Amy had dearly loved a bit of mischief, and did even now for the matter of that; and their childish love and faith, and firm belief in the good and beautiful, which clung to them even yet. These tales of auld lang syne, how fast they make the time flit away. How delightfully!—how pleasant to forget ourselves occasionally in the dear old dreamy past!

Amy and Cecil looked at each other when dinner was announced, in absolute amazement.

"Impossible," said the girl, "that it can really be so late!"

"Nay, it was but this morning you insisted upon making me out too slow," said the rector, as he held the provoking watch before her eyes.

"No time to dress to-day, Amy, nor does it much signify, for I dare say Cecil can put up with you as you are for once, although I grant that the wind has somewhat dishevelled these bright tresses."

Cecil smiled, and whispered something about beauty unadorned, which, although not very original, served to make his fair companion blush most becomingly. These old tales are very pleasant to listen to sometimes, and from some people.

Woman like, in spite of the lateness of the hour, Amy did contrive to steal a few moments for the re-adjustment of her toilet, and came down to dinner looking so neat and happy, and withal, so conscious, that Cecil could scarcely take his eyes off her to eat it. Nor was her own appetite much improved with feeling how constantly and intently his gaze was rivetted upon her.

After dinner, Mrs. Jelf voluntarily under-

went the unwonted fatigue of walking over to the Rectory to see her favorite; qualifying it by declaring what Amy verily believed to be a fib, that she had business close by, and thought she might as well drop in as wait until he visited Castle Coombe on the following day.

"Why you are looking younger than ever, Mrs. Jelf," said Cecil, eagerly returning her warm and friendly greeting. For if he had loved the prim old housekeeper for nothing else, he could not have avoided doing so, for all her care and kindness to Amy.

"It is you who have learned to flatter, Mr. Grey," paying involuntary homage to his manly appearance by the respectful tone in which she spoke. "But you are looking pale too. I am afraid they have not taken care of you at Mr. Drummond's. Do try and persuade him, Miss Amy, to take some of that strong beef jelly which did the cook so much good, when she was ailing last autumn, just as he may be now,

getting thinner and paler every day, and no one knew why."

"But I am neither thin or ill," said Cecil, not over pleased at the comparison, or the thought of the jelly either.

"You want strengthening nevertheless, and I shall send some over to the Rectory immediately on my return, and trust to Miss Amy to see that you eat it once or twice in the course of every day."

"She must give me something very sweet to take after it then," replied the young man laughingly, "or I am sure I never shall."

"Oh! yes, never fear that, but you will not find it unpleasant. And so you are growing a great man, Mr. Grey?"

"I hope to do so one of these days, Mrs. Jelf."

"And getting quite handsome too, I declare!"

Amy laughed, but grew sad again when the rector added—

"He is very like his father."

"Not the least bit in the world, sir, those eyes, and that high forehead are his mother's. Mr. Grey was fair."

Mrs. Jelf too, had her reasons for insisting upon this point, for she also remembered how that father had died of a lingering consumption, and would have been sorry indeed to trace any resemblance in the handsome looking young man before her, to the feeble invalid as she had last seen him, bowed down by disease and approaching death. And she was right, there was none, and Cecil inherited nothing from his father, but his clear, vigorous mind and refined taste.

"Well, I believe I was mistaken," said Mr. Alleyne, "and it is only his manner and expression which Cecil has caught from being so much with him."

"To be sure, that is all," replied the old lady positively.

"How much longer must I stand here to be passed judgment upon?" asked Cecil of Amy.

"Oh! I believe the inquisition is nearly over."

"And the woman as usual gets the best of it," answered the companion.

"Of course she does."

"Are you as fond of having your own way as ever, Amy?"

"Yes, when I can get it; if not it is after all just as pleasant to give up, nay, far more so when it is to one we love."

"And will you promise always to give up to me?"

"No, indeed, lest you might take advantage of so rash a vow to play the tyrant!"

"Now, do you seriously believe I could ever play the tyrant to you?"

"Perhaps not, but then Mr. Alleyne says all power is dangerous."

"So you will not trust me—you will not promise?"

"Not now at least," said Amy wilfully.

"But one day you will?"

"Yes, some day you shall see how good and obedient I can be when I like. But I fear it will not be just yet."

"You fear, Amy; suppose then we begin to practise at once?"

"No, I thank you," replied the girl, retreating from him with a merry smile. "I am not in the mood at present to play the gentle and dutiful. Perhaps by the time you come back again, Cecil."

Ah, little did she know the wild hopes to which these words gave rise in the breast of her companion, or they might probably have been left unsaid. And yet, we are not quite certain about this either; for Amy loved the protector and guardian of her infant years, the playfellow of her childhood, with a pure, innocent, and holy affection, far above all subterfuge or concealment.

Of course the young people had to walk

part of the way back with Mrs. Jelf, in return for the extraordinary exertion made by her in her anxiety to see Cecil ; and if it was a little dull passing over those bright green fields with a sober and subdued step, their walk home, by moonlight afterwards, made ample amends for all. Oh ! those moonlight walks, when we are young, and in the company of friends justly dear to us. There is nothing like them in after life, unless it may be, a pleasant memory, hal-
lowed and purified by time.

CHAPTER IV.

AMY was right in imagining that Cecil would a thousand times rather have spent the day quietly with them, than dined in state, as she called it, at Castle Coombe; nay, he was more than half inclined to be somewhat impatient, a sign that the quick spirit of the boy was not entirely subdued in the man, and declared that it was a day utterly wasted.

“ Now I must preach to you, as dear grand-

papa did to me," said Amy with an air of playful reproof, which did not entirely conceal how fully she shared in his feelings, and in his disappointment. "But it's no use being rebellious, and after all it will soon be over."

"Yes, we will leave very early, and enjoy another moonlight walk home together, there is some consolation in that."

"But I do not know whether I shall be permitted to return with you, for Mr. Alleyne only bargained for yesterday, and I am not quite so much my own mistress as I used to be, when it was only to coax Mrs. Jelf, and be sure and get my own way in the end."

"But cannot you coax the Countess?"

"Oh! Cecil, that is a sure sign that you have never seen her."

"No, never since I was quite a boy."

"One might as well attempt to thaw an iceberg!"

"She must be a regular polar bear to resist you, Amy!"

"Yes, that is just it, I used to call her the Countess Bugbear! long before I saw her, much to the horror of your dear grandpapa. But somehow afterwards I could not help feeling grateful for being permitted not only to remain at the Castle, but without being confined, as I once anticipated, to the housekeeper's room; and even made up my mind to try and love her, but have since given up the idea as an utter impossibility."

"And what sort of beings are the daughters?"

"Oh! the eldest, equally cold and beautiful, a sort of ice-plant, graceful but chilling. Lady Charlotte is less lovely and refined, but lively and good humoured. Indeed if it were not for her it would be dull enough at times, much more so than if Mr. Alleyne and I were quite alone, because then there was no reserve, and one might say and do just what one liked."

"Well, I am glad there is a bright touch in your cold and gloomy picture of the inhabi-

tants of the Castle, the truthfulness of which I shall be able to ascertain for myself, worse luck !”

“ Hush ! you must not grumble, but try and coax Mr. Alleyne into getting, if possible, a prolongation of my present leave of absence, for I do think it would break my heart to see you going away without me.”

“ And I am quite sure that it would break mine, Amy.”

The good rector promised to do his best, and did not think it likely that his request would be refused, seeing that Cecil was only going to stay such a very short time.

“ Out of which nearly a whole day will be sacrificed to her,” observed the young man.

“ Am I to tell her that, Cecil ?”

“ Best not I think for my sake,” said Amy laughingly, “ lest she should take it into her head to keep me at home if it were only to punish him.”

“ And it would be impossible to inflict a severer punishment,” replied her companion, “ so I will take care not to offend her ladyship if I can help it ; and now, Amy, as we have still an hour or two to spare I want you to show me the letter which you received from your unknown relative, and tell me all about it.”

The girl went immediately to fetch it, bringing down at the same time that cruel epistle, which she verily believed to that hour had caused her poor mother's death ; and on comparing the two together, the hand-writing was found to be precisely similar.

“ I felt sure that it was from him,” said Amy, “ although I never before thought of looking. Oh, this stern, terrible grandfather ! Do you think it likely that he will ever claim me, Cecil ?”

“ Scarcely after such a lapse of years, otherwise he would have done so long since, for

it is evident your place of abode is known to him."

"Oh! I hope not, for Mr. Alleyne says in that case I ought to go, since it was poor mamma's dying command."

"There are many circumstances may happen before then under which it would be impossible."

"What circumstances?" questioned Amy with eagerness.

"You may be married for instance, and your husband possess a prior claim to your obedience."

"How foolishly you talk, Cecil."

"And why foolishly, does not every girl expect to get married one day? aye, even hoping very frequently against hope."

"Yes, I suppose so, but I have never thought about it."

Her companion implicitly believed her, and only changed the subject now, because the time

had not yet come to argue upon it at greater length, and teach her to think just as he wished that she should; and no very difficult task either, whispered the sanguine heart of the youthful suitor, alas! for man's vanity now-a-days.

"Then you think I may still hope to remain here in quiet, here where I am so happy?"

"Yes, certainly, there seems indeed to be no love lost between this unknown relative and yourself; and yet were he to behold, he might learn to be very proud of you."

"Then I trust we shall never meet."

"Rather wish with good Mrs. Jelf, that you were less beautiful and fascinating, Amy, for therein lies the danger."

The girl laughed and colored, some how she could not bring herself seriously to desire this, even to avoid the notice of her dreaded grandfather; and yet she would not have minded so much could she have been quite

sure that Cecil would have loved her all the same.

Long did they sit and converse on a subject possessing such an ample scope for vague imagining, coloring the future with the hopeful hues of their own young fancies, rather than the sober tints of reality ; but then there was nothing strange in that, for it is what we are all so apt to do, even when made painfully aware at length from repeated disappointments of the transitory and fleeting nature of their dazzling brightness ; and were only disturbed at last by the somewhat impatient tones of the good rector, who knew so well the Countess's love of punctuality, and stood, if the truth must be spoken, almost as much in awe of her as Mrs. Jelf ; or else, what is more likely, he could not banish the recollection of many former kindnesses, and loved not to offend, if it could be any how avoided, those peculiar prejudices which even the very best of us sometimes possess.

Thanks, however, to the few moments spent by Amy at her hasty toilet, they arrived after all in excellent time, and were most graciously received by the Countess, who was evidently struck by the handsome countenance, and noble bearing of her young visitor, as well as pleased with his brilliant conversational powers, and the knowledge he possessed upon most of the subjects which came under discussion, just displaying sufficient to amuse without wearying his auditors. Then no one knew better than Cecil how to turn a compliment without its seeming one; and well did he think all the pains which he had taken to make himself agreeable, rewarded by the look of gentle pride in Amy's soft eyes as they met his, when the dinner was at length announced.

This is a meal which we always hate to say anything about, although well aware that people must dine, and by no means disposed to omit an event which forms in the general course of daily life an equally necessary and pleasant

opportunity of relaxation, indeed but for these social gatherings around the hospitable board, existence would become we fear, a sad business-like affair. But we maintain for all this, that of all stiff, formal, and disagreeable inflictions, a dinner party is the very worst, and the one in question was even more than usually so.

Cecil tried in vain to break through the spell, and rise superior to those cold, brief replies, which were continually breaking the thread of his discourse, just at that point where he found it most difficult to renew it again, and gave up the attempt at length in absolute despair. Amy, who had never met with the slightest encouragement to converse with any degree of freedom in the presence of her patroness, did not dream of doing so on the present occasion ; and Lady Charlotte, although far from allowing it herself, was just about that age when young ladies, of family and fortune more especially, are expected to be seen and

not heard ; as for her sister no one ever thought for a moment of her troubling herself to talk. So that after the first few moments the only conversation which passed at table was carried on between the Countess and Mr. Alleyne, and that was little enough, and the good old rector could scarcely find it in his heart to blame Cecil for having called it a day sacrificed.

“ My brother will soon put an end to all this dumb show ! ” whispered Lady Charlotte to Amy as they quitted the dining-room.

“ Is he about to return then ? ”

“ Hush ! I will tell you all presently. ”

As soon as they had reached the drawing-room, the Countess called Amy, to consult with her about some embroidery patterns, detaining her by her side until the entrance of the gentlemen, who did not linger long behind them, so that Lady Charlotte had no opportunity of imparting the grand secret which she seemed dying with impatience to relate.

After tea Mr. Alleyne begged us usual for a little music, and the young ladies played and sang several airs and duets, much to Cecil's satisfaction, who was enthusiastically fond of it.

"Perhaps Miss Fitzallan will oblige us now," said the Countess at length, and in a tone which sounded very like a command. Amy sat down to the instrument immediately, and sang a popular air with much brilliancy as well as exquisite sweetness.

"Why how wonderfully you are improved!" exclaimed Cecil, in raptures at her performance.

"The wonder would be if I were not, with the benefit of such instruction as I have had," said the girl turning gratefully towards her patroness.

"You have been very kind to her, she tells me," said the rector.

"Nay, it was a pleasure to myself, and I felt sure from the first that her voice only needed

the necessary cultivation to bring forth its hidden powers; and in these days a good style in playing and singing is a fortune to a governess."

Amy looked at Cecil, and wondered what should make his cheeks burn, and his eyes gleam so strangely. Was he growing proud? She hoped not.

"Now play this noisy overture," whispered Lady Charlotte, "that we may talk without their overhearing us. I too have a brother coming home, and this week."

"I am so glad for your sake," said Amy, "since he seems to be so dear to you."

"Aye, and you may well be for your own, for I assure you Castle Coombe will be quite a different place soon; and what do you think? he is going to bring Mr. Trevallion back with him, to spend some time here; we all liked him so much in Italy, and he took such care of Dunorven, that even mamma made no objection to the plan, although it would have been no

use by the bye, if she had, for it was settled before my brother wrote, but then he does just as he likes, she never scolds him. I wish Mr. Grey had come a week later," added the good-natured girl, "it would have been so much gayer for him, for Dunorven will have his horses down, although he is seldom able to ride now poor fellow! and they will go shooting when the proper season arrives, and get up picnic parties I should not wonder, besides all sorts of pleasant schemes."

"Yes, it will be very gay and delightful doubtless," said Cecil, and yet he did not look pleased either.

"And my brother is so handsome! Amy thought so too, when I shewed her his picture—did you not?"

"Yes, he has splendid eyes, and a sweet and kind expression about the mouth."

"Mr. Trevallion too, is reckoned very good looking, but not nearly so much so in my

opinion as Dunorven. What do you say, Anne?"

"I am sure I never thought of noticing," replied her sister coldly.

"Quite a proper, and young lady like answer. But surely you must have observed how proud Trevallion is?"

"He never seemed proud to me," said Lady Anne in the same passionless tone.

"Ah, like loves like, I suppose."

Her sister colored, and did not speak again, but then no one expected it of her, she was always so silent.

"Are you trying to keep up a running accompaniment to the music, Lady Charlotte?" asked the Countess in a tone of slight rebuke.

"No, mamma, not that I know of."

"It sounded very like it."

"I was only talking."

"But you talk a great deal too much sometimes."

"Which is the worst," asked Lady Charlotte

in a whisper of her sister, "to talk too much or too little, Anne? But too much, I suppose, since one gets chided for that and never for the other. And now sing me one more song, Amy, and let it be English, for my brother likes nothing better than an old English ballad, while Mr. Trevallion on the contrary is mad after everything Italian."

"And is Miss Fitzallan to try and please both these heroes at once?" asked Cecil somewhat bitterly.

"Certainly, if she can," replied the laughing Lady Charlotte, "a double conquest will be all the more glorious, and a duel something quite new and romantic in the annals of this common, everyday world of ours. But I do not know what Anne will say to it though. Of course Dunorven may fall in love with who he likes, but I am not so sure about his friend."

"Mr. Trevallion can be nothing to me," replied her sister in answer to that arch glance.

"No, nor any one else, I verily believe you have that fabled heart of stone, of which I have somewhere read. And always remind me of those cruel and beautiful princesses in the old fairy tales, who set their true and faithful knights to perform all sorts of dangerous and impossible adventures, and never thought of rewarding them if they succeeded, or missing them if they perished."

"And surely it was reward enough to obey the behests of so fair a lady," observed Cecil, who was suddenly seized with a mischievous desire to see whether a little flattery might not be able to thaw through the icy barrier of reserve, in which it was the fancy of that young girl to incase herself. But the cold hauteur of the glance that met his for a single instant, and was again withdrawn, dissipated the illusion, and he set down the affair at once as hopeless.

Meanwhile the Countess of Castle Coombe had quite won the heart of the simple rector,

by her praises of his beloved grandson, and the gracious manner in which she spoke of Amy, as not only being a well-disposed young person, and highly accomplished, but one whom she could have no possible objection to associate with her daughters while they continue so young; on the contrary, Lady Anne had already derived much benefit from her instructions, and it was her sister's own fault if she was less advanced.

"The only complaint that I have to make with regard to Miss Fitzallan," said her ladyship, "is one which will no doubt cure itself ere long, her superabundance of animal spirits."

"Ah, we must not expect old heads upon young shoulders," replied Mr. Alleyne, while he neglected not to avail himself of the Countess's present gracious mood to prefer Amy's petition for permission to remain at the Rectory during Cecil's stay; to which she made no objection, provided Mrs. Jelf could spare her, as she was well aware how much the worthy housekeeper

reckoned upon Amy's tasteful assistance at so important a period as the return of the heir of Castle Coombe, to the ancient halls of his forefathers. And then she went on to speak of her son with all a mother's joy and pride, while the scornful lip, in general so cold and stern, actually trembled with emotion whenever it dwelt lingeringly upon that beloved name.

"You must come over and see Dunorven very frequently," said she, "and expect now to be occasionally disturbed in your favourite studies, unless you will suffer him to share them with you as of old?"

"With pleasure!" exclaimed the good rector, with an eagerness that plainly marked his sincerity. "And now if your ladyship will excuse us, it is time that we thought of taking our departure."

"How I envy you your walk home this glorious night!" whispered Lady Charlotte, "and with such a companion too. By the bye,

I have never once heard you call him brother, all the time you have been here."

Amy herself would have been astonished at this a few days since, but now she only coloured and remained silent.

"Then we shall not see you again for some days to come, but you will think of us when you hear the bells ring to celebrate his return. I am surprised that mamma did not insist upon your coming back on that day at least."

"I should only have been in the way," said Amy, and was just about to add—how much happier she should be at the Rectory, when she paused suddenly, fearing lest it might seem unkind to the fond and anxious sister.

Cecil alone noticed her momentary hesitation.

"If you would rather not go back with us just now," said he hastily, "say so at once, Amy."

"Rather not go back with you, dear Cecil!" repeated the girl, raising her eyes to his with a

look of such innocent wonder and astonishment, that he felt ashamed of having for an instant doubted her.

"I mean now that the Castle is likely to be so gay," stammered he, scarcely conscious of what he was saying.

"I do not think you know exactly what it is you do mean," said Amy placing her hand in his, with a loving smile. "But come, Mr. Alleyne is waiting for us."

"I am sorry you are going, Miss Fitzallan," said Lady Anne, "I wanted so much to get on with my Italian."

"We must be doubly diligent then on my return, to make up for lost time."

Her ladyship looked as if that would not do nearly so well, but said no more; it was a marvel her having uttered so much without being first addressed.

The moon shone as brightly on that night as it had done on the preceding one, but the little party forgot to point out to each other its

brightness, and were unusually silent. Were they less happy? We will answer for one at least by her flushed cheek and beaming eyes. Mr. Alleyne too, had only forgotten the present in the past, a common fault with age. But Cecil's brow was dark and clouded, and a thousand vague and undefined fears, those "shadows of coming events," crowded thick and fast about his heart. He felt that the hour of trial was approaching for both Amy and himself; and feared, when he should have trusted and believed, making the very misery from which he shrank.

CHAPTER V.

" I WANT to ask you, Cecil," said Amy, as they sat together on the third morning after his arrival, " what it was that made you look so angry yesterday, when the Countess talked about my being a governess? You know it was settled long ago, when we were children, that we must both endeavour to get our own living. And see how nobly you have begun."

"It is different with a girl," replied her companion.

"And why different? Surely it is no disgrace to try and be independent?"

"Certainly not if it were indeed needful."

"And is it not, Cecil? Mr. Alleyne is far from rich, and has already done so much for me that I would fain repay him in some measure if it were possible."

"Let it be by loving him better than ever," said her companion.

"Ah! no that is not possible, I already love him so well."

"Are you not growing proud, my Amy?"

"No, it is you who seem changed," replied the girl, while a quick, unbidden tear dimmed the brightness of those soft dark eyes, and was dashed away again unshed. "You who used to be ever ready to counsel and assist me in all my little schemes, which you now only laugh at."

"Nay, Amy, how have I deserved this?" said her companion reproachfully.

"Forgive my petulance, dear Cecil! And only tell me what you wish—what you would have me do—just as you used."

"And will you promise to obey as implicitly as in those by-gone days?"

"If I can," said Amy meekly.

"Well then you must consent to remain here for a few years longer, the pet and darling of my grandfather—renew our ancient league that no one in the interm is to be loved half as well as your old playfellow Cecil.—And at the end of that period I have no doubt but what I shall be able to send for my little Amy to keep house for me, as she always promised to do, when I should have one of my own. Will you come dearest! and consent to quit all the splendour of Castle Coombe, to share my, perhaps, humble home?"

For a moment the girl drooped her sweet face upon her bosom, but when she lifted it

again it was radiant with a timid joy, and she placed her hand silently in that of her companion, fearing to trust her voice in reply, lest she might say too much.

"Nay speak to me, Amy, tell me that you will be mine!"

And still no answer came from those quivering lips.

"What not a word?"

"What can I say?" murmured the girl.

"That you love me, Amy."

"Ah! you might have been sure of that!"

He was sure of it.

"Then you will remain faithful whatever may come to pass?"

"Cecil there is no need to promise that."

"You think so now, dearest! but hereafter, when you are courted and flattered, and told a thousand times a day how beautiful you are, by Lord Dunorven, and his aristocratic friend, perhaps, what will you do then, Amy?"

“ Laugh at them,” replied the girl, with something of her natural archness.

“ Just at first you may.”

“ And afterwards I shall get used to it and not care a bit about it. But after all, it seems, good Mrs. Jelf was right in saying that beauty did not always bring happiness, for, perhaps, if I were less so, you would never doubt me thus, Cecil—or love me either,” added the girl, a moment afterwards, to the destruction of her previously advanced theory.

“ Ah! I do not see how I could help that, how any one can help loving you, and therefore it is that I tremble.”

“ Well, suppose every one does love me,” said the girl, while a crimson flush settled upon her young cheek, giving added brilliancy to those large, dark eyes, “and I only love you, should you be very angry with me, Cecil? I have often dreamt thus,” she continued, hiding that bright face upon his shoulder, as he drew

her closer to him, "that my grandfather had returned to claim me, and I was a great heiress, with suitors innumerable, and wealth unbounded; and then the choice was given me whether I would continue thus, or give up all for you—and—and—but you shall guess how it ended in my dreams."

"You chose me of course!" replied her companion, his eyes beaming with happiness.

"Ah, now you are growing too confident, which is even worse than your former doubts, so I shall tell you no more."

"Only one thing, Amy, after being accustomed to all the luxury of Castle Coombe, could you really manage to live upon a very little, comparatively speaking?"

"Have you forgotten," said the girl, "my one only wish, when in our childhood's days I aspired to be its heiress, that I might have nothing to do all day long but sit and look at you?"

"And would that content you now, Amy?"

"I think it would," replied the girl gently. "Besides I too have something to bring towards housekeeping, a whole three hundred pounds, besides being, as Mr. Alleyne says, a great heiress in perspective. And thanks to good Mrs. Jelf, am an excellent economist."

"Ah! I am afraid you would have something else to do just at first, besides looking at me."

"But then should I not be working for you which is all the same."

"You are a true woman, Amy," said Cecil, gazing upon her with eyes that glistened with pride and affection, "and have made me very happy. With such an incentive to toil, I have no fears as to my success."

"Or my faith, eh, dear Cecil! oh let us trust one another!"

"I will—I do! But now tell me, Amy, have you really loved me as I have you, from

the very beginning—the very first day when we met in the churchyard, even until now?”

“ Oh, yes, I began I think by being grateful, and ended with the same feeling,” added the girl abruptly and earnestly; and then a shadow came over the brightness of her young face. “ But Cecil—your grandfather ?”

“ Our grandfather !” interrupted her companion.

“ Do you think he will be willing to receive me as his child ?”

“ Has he not looked upon you as such for years ?”

“ But not his real child ! and he may think perhaps, the unknown orphan no fitting wife for Cecil Grey.”

“ Now you wrong him by these doubts, and he shall scold you well for it bye and bye, when we tell him all. But I cannot part with you yet, Amy, I have so much to ask and to tell. Look here,” added he, taking a paper

from his bosom, "do you know what this is?"

"It looks like dust—stay, it is very sweet nevertheless."

"It is the rose you gave me years and years ago, Amy, and which I have preserved ever since as a talisman to shield me from harm, and make me great."

"How silly!" said the girl, a glad tear falling upon his hand as she spoke, and contradicting those light, laughing tones.

"And have you nothing of mine treasured with equal care?"

"No indeed," replied his companion, "for it needed not ought to remind me of one who was never out of my thoughts for ten minutes at a time."

"In future let it be but five, Amy," said the gratified Cecil, playfully seeking those half averted eyes; and the girl fancied it would not have been very difficult to have promised that, although she took very good care not to say so,

thinking, perhaps, that he was sufficiently confident on the point already ; and she was not far from right, but what did it signify if it made him so joyous and happy ? Ah, simple Amy, you will grow wiser one of these days ; a woman's heart is a precious volume, which it were prudent in her to keep half closed, even from the perusal of those she loves best in the world, and those hidden glimpses will serve to enhance its value in their eyes.

Long they talked together of that fairy home which he had yet to win, but which already stood as palpably before his mind's eye, as though the years of probation that must intervene before the realization of the dream, were already passed. The easy chair kept sacred for the use of the good rector, whose presence was to shed a constant blessing on the happiness he had done so much to promote.—Amy's fair smiling face and light form, moving about like a sunbeam personified, as Cecil called it, or sitting at his side with her cheerful and

soothing voice, whiling away all sense of weariness and fatigue, and luring him on to fresh exertions.

Thus dreamed the young lover, and his companion's visions were no less bright and hopeful; and thus the fleet hours sped rapidly away.

It was not long before the good rector, from whom they had never yet, as Amy had said, kept any thing concealed, was apprised of what had taken place, and his blessing so willingly and cheerfully bestowed, hushed every wild fear in the breast of the grateful girl.

"Why I have been almost as silly as yourselves, dear children," said the happy old man, "for I have been looking forward for years to this hour, ever since Dodsworth spoke to me about it before you went first to college, Cecil."

"And what did the good doctor say?" asked his grandson.

"No more than you have since found out

for yourselves, that it was all nonsense to be calling each other brother and sister."

"And yet I think my little Amy missed the appellation at first," said Cecil.

"Yes, that I did indeed, and should have felt half fearful lest I might have unknowingly offended you, only that your manner was not less kind."

"Poor child!" said Mr. Alleyne, laying his hand caressingly upon her bowed head. "But you have forgiven the omission since then I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, you know I could never be very long angry with Cecil about any thing," replied Amy in her usual gay tone, but without lifting up those bright eyes, which seemed for the last few hours to be oppressed with a sudden weight, so rarely were they raised from the ground.

"I think," said Cecil after a pause, "that it would be as well to say nothing about this to the Countess, at least just at present."

"And why not, my dear boy?"

"Oh! she might think Amy much too young for such an engagement. Or I much too undeserving of so rich a prize."

"Oh, Cecil!" interrupted the girl reproachfully.

"Well, at any rate she would be always preaching about it, and good Mrs. Jelf too; and Lady Charlotte would laugh at, and tease her, in a good-natured way no doubt, but still it might prove annoying."

"Yes, Cecil is right," said Amy with all the intuitive delicacy of a first attachment, "it were best that no one knew anything about it but our three selves."

"As you will," said the rector, "but I never yet knew of any good coming from such concealments."

"Oh, but dear grandfather! it is much the best."

"Why, could you not bear to be laughed at, silly child?"

"Nay, I should be too proud of Cecil's love to care about that, but still I would rather no one else knew it."

"And I too," said his grandson.

"Shall I guess one of your woman's reasons, Amy?"

"If you can," said the girl archly.

"What you defy me, then dread my penetration, and confess my power. Is it not that you will no longer be able to sit apart at your work, or book, thinking all the while on other things, and no one a bit the wiser?"

"Ah, you are a conjuror, grandpapa!" said the girl simply, laughing and blushing.

"And now shall I try and find out some of your many reasons, Cecil?"

"No, only humour them as you have hitherto so kindly done," and the young man had never yet pleaded in vain with those dark, earnest eyes, so like his dear lost mother's, nor did he do so in the present instance.

"I consent then, but mind it is no fault of mine if harm should hereafter come of it."

"No, we will bear all the blame, and the punishment too," said the grandson cheerfully. While Amy shuddered she knew not why; and yet it was something to have preserved her precious secret from the cold eyes of the world.

CHAPTER VI.

"HARK!" said Amy, "how merrily the bells ring, I thought this morning that he would be sure and come by seeing the flag waving from the castle turret; and good Mrs. Jelf to do every thing herself, and never once to send for me, how busy she must have been these last few days, which have passed so happily with us; and here is Jem Marsh come to bring me

some flowers as usual, and tell us all about it."

"Take care," whispered Cecil, "or I shall be jealous of all these fragrant offerings; you know—"

'In Eastern lands they talk in flowers.'"

Amy laughed at the idea of Jem Marsh, understanding that most sweet and poetical of all languages with its fairy-like symbols, and delicate imagery. Expressing so much by the slightest inclination to the right or the left, and requiring such exquisite nicety of arrangement in its oderous messages.

"Oh, Miss Amy," said the panting boy, or rather young man by this time, "you should just go down to the village, the roads are lined with people, all full dressed, with flags flying, and music playing, to welcome home the young master."

"And when is he expected to arrive?"

"In another hour or so at the latest, but it is not quite certain."

"I should like to go," said Amy, glancing at Cecil.

"And so should I," said his grandfather. "Indeed it would be showing no more than a proper mark of respect towards the boy whom I have held in my arms many and many's the time, and watched over when we half feared every moment would be his last. God bless him! say I, for he was a noble fellow!"

"He seems to have bewitched all hearts, I think," said Cecil, as Amy, in obedience to Mr. Alleyne's desire, hastily tied on her bonnet.

"But surely you are going to put on a veil?"

"A veil always makes me so hot, Cecil!"

"At any rate we cannot stay for it now," said the rector impatiently.

"How pleased and anxious Lady Charlotte is feeling at this moment," said Amy.

"Not more so than you are looking."

"But you know she bade me think of her to-day."

"And of him too, if I heard right."

“Now I do think, Cecil, that you are really jealous,” said Amy, stooping down to look into his face, the gravity of which was not proof against her loving smile.

“No, not exactly, but I am sick of hearing of this Lord Dunorven!”

“Why, what can he have done to offend you, when you never even saw him?”

“Created an interest in a heart which I would have wholly my own, with his noble feelings—handsome face—and lame leg! I wish I was lame, and then, perhaps, you would make all this fuss about me!”

“Oh! I am sure I should be very sorry,” said the girl, scarcely able to forbear laughing.

“You would not like a lame man for your husband then, Amy?”

“I don’t know about that,” replied his companion wilfully, “if he were good—and rich—and very—very—fond of me—and was never cross, or jealous without cause!”

“Now you only say this to plague me.”

"Perhaps I do, but you are really enough to provoke a saint! with your doubts, and suspicions, and causeless fears!"

"Oh! if I could be quite sure that they were causeless!"

"And what must I do to convince you of it? Unbeliever that you are!" said the girl with a fond smile. "Nothing, I do think, but shut myself up in a convent, if I could find such a thing, and there remain until it was your supreme will and pleasure to let me out. Or, perhaps, a strong room at the Castle would do, with neither doors or windows, and only a grating to peep out of, and you take the key up to London with you."

"No, indeed, unless I could afford to keep a huge dragon, to devour all the gallant knights who would be attempting your rescue in spite of me," answered Cecil in the same light tone.

"One of which would be sure and conquer in the end, as they always do in those dear delightful old chronicles!"

“ And the fair princess fall in love with her deliverer, as a matter of course,” added Cecil.

“ Oh ! yes, we must not leave out that part of the story.”

“ And then you would reward him with your sweet self, in return for his cutting off my head, or breaking my heart, Amy. But I do think if the conqueror should turn out to be this young lord, I should be tempted to get up without a head to dispute the prize with him ! And yet—no—it would not be worth contending for then.”

“ How wildly and bitterly you speak, Cecil, now you are angry with me again.”

“ I am a wild dreamer ! that is all,” replied her companion, “ and cannot shake off a strange improbable fear which has fastened itself upon my mind.”

“ Hark !” exclaimed Amy, “ I hear the sound of carriage wheels, and the people shouting. He is coming at last !” And springing from

the detaining arm of Cecil, to the side of his grandfather, she bent forward with a girlish and natural curiosity to catch a glimpse of the young heir. While those who knew and loved her, and they were not a few, for Amy was a second "Lady Bountiful," after her own humble fashion, eagerly made way for her to come in front of the crowd.

The carriage, which was open, moved along very slowly, the young lord nodding kindly and graciously in acknowledgment of their hearty welcome, while many flung flowers into it as it passed. Amy, in the excitement of the moment, and unconscious until then that she yet held the bouquet presented to her by Jem Marsh, following the example of the rest. But Dunorven's earnest and admiring gaze, and the quickness with which he singled out her flowers, and bowing to the fair donor, placed them gallantly in his bosom, recalled Amy to a consciousness of the foolishness, to say the least of

it, of her momentary impulse, and she glanced eagerly around to see if Cecil had observed what was passing. One look upon that sad and angry brow was punishment enough for all her thoughtlessness.

"Nothing could have been more gracefully acknowledged, my dear child!" said Mr. Alleyne, with a well-pleased smile, "and how handsome he is, with the same sweet expression about his mouth as ever. I shall proceed on to the Castle, in order to pay my respects, and you and Cecil can walk home together. Do you hear, my dear boy?"

Cecil held out his arm which was untaken, and they walked on in silence, side by side. The good rector far too much occupied with his own thoughts to observe that anything was amiss.

"Do forgive me, dear Cecil!" said Amy, at length, in a tearful voice. "Indeed I am very sorry now that I gave him those flowers, but it

seemed so natural when I saw every one else doing the same thing. And after all, there was nothing strange in the gift."

"Or his manner of receiving it, I suppose? There was I so proud of my single rose, and here you have given him at first sight, a whole bouquet!"

"And I will give you a hundred bouquets, dear Cecil! if you will only smile upon me again. I dare say he will fling it away as soon as he gets home, and think no more about it."

"I dare say not, or why was it singled out so carefully from among the rest, to be placed in his bosom with such a lover-like look."

"Oh! Cecil—and this is the first time we have ever met!"

"And yet you gave him your flowers."

Amy's tears now began to flow fast and silently, and had he seen that she was weeping, there would have been an end of it, for he never could resist those tears. The one great

fault in Cecil's character was a want of faith. Amy would never even so much as dreamed of doubting him. But then men and women think so differently of these things.

"This all came of not fastening on a veil," said the girl, rallying herself at length, and beginning to think that the whole affair was after all, a very silly one, in which idea she was not far from right.

"And being so strangely beautiful and fascinating, that no one can help falling in love with you at once!" observed Cecil, also a little ashamed of his petulance and ill humour. "But indeed, Amy, it was very thoughtless to give him those flowers."

"Yes, I know it was," said the girl meekly.

"Why, I would have gone down upon my knees for them, and yet you threw them to him without his having even the trouble of asking. It must be a fine thing to be a lord, and the heir of Castle Coombe!"

“ And better still to be my own kind Cecil now, and by and bye, one of the greatest lawyers in the kingdom, or judge, or Lord Chancellor, perhaps, that sounds better than Lord Dunorven, does it not? And even simple Cecil Grey, is a thousand times sweeter in my opinion.”

“ Then I will not wish to change it.”

“ And you will forgive me?”

“ Oh, Amy, it is I who should sue for pardon. And yet it was provoking to see his exulting smile.”

“ Yes, it was, I grant you,” interposed Amy, fearful of a fresh outbreak of passion, and yet, thinking in her own heart that it was the very sweetest and kindest she had ever seen, Cecil’s only excepted, that is, when he was in a good humour. And anxious to change the conversation she enquired if he had noticed Lord Dunorven’s travelling companion, Mr. Trevallion.

“ Of course, which I’ll venture to swear is more than you did, Amy.”

"No, indeed, I only looked at the young lord himself," said the girl with a simplicity that amused even while it exasperated him.

"What was he like?"

"Most Englishmen when they attempt to play the foreigner, and sport pale, dust-coloured mustachoes."

"But Lady Charlotte says he is handsome."

"Yes, handsome for a fair man, I dare say she meant, (Cecil himself was dark of course), nevertheless he has a good forehead and a remarkably proud and aristocratic air. And his pale face presented quite a contrast to the animated countenance of his companion. Too animated by half," added the young man pettishly, vexed with himself for the admission, "for he did nothing but grin and show his teeth, because they happen to be tolerably white and even."

"That's just what Mrs. Jelf used to say to you years ago, when you were a boy," said

Amy laughingly. "But we have had so much to say to one another that I did not think of noticing since, and you have given me no chance to-day."

"I am not in a laughing humour," said Cecil, trying a great deal harder than it seemed worth while to preserve his gravity.

"But you are not angry with me still surely?"

"No, no, but you must never do that again, Amy."

"I never will!" said the girl decidedly, and seeing that there was no chance of her being tempted to break her word, he did well in believing her.

The good rector returned home to a late dinner in high spirits at the cordial and affectionate greeting vouchsafed him by the young heir, whose praises he seemed never weary of repeating, although the theme was far from tending to restore Cecil's good humour.

"His friend," observed Mr. Alleyne, "seems to be quite of a different stamp, and the servants say that he is as proud as—"

"The Countess Bugbear herself!" interrupted Amy. "Was not that what you were going to say?"

"No, little mischief! But I see how it is, Cecil spoils you."

"No, indeed he does not," replied Amy quickly. "Why would you believe he has scolded me more this morning, than you and Mrs. Jelf together, for the last three months?"

"And serve you right too," said Cecil, drawing her away lest she should tell tales, and his grandfather think him, perhaps, but a silly boy after all.

"Ah! you may well be ashamed of yourself!" said Amy, holding up her finger at him. "Now how do you mean to bribe me to be quiet and hold my tongue?"

"Shall I show you?" replied her lover,

while the girl suddenly retreated from his arch glance.

“ No, I propose a truce, with no conditions, and only put you on honorable parole never to transgress again !”

“ And what if I were to break the treaty ?”

“ Then you should be shot without mercy for a traitor and unbeliever as you are ! But seriously, dear Cecil ! will you promise never to doubt me again ?”

“ Will you promise never again to give me cause for it ?”

“ With all my heart ! But then you must not fancy things that do not exist.”

“ Oh ! Amy, did I this morning ? Was there no bouquet flung, and kissed, and placed exultingly in the hero’s bosom ! And all this before my very eyes !”

“ Why it would have been worse still if I had done it behind your back. But I am quite ready to allow that I was to blame for my imprudence.”

“ And I for my petulance. So suppose we kiss and be friends ? ”

“ The latter, willingly,” said Amy laughing, and blushing. And the former, too, it would seem, whether she liked it or not ; for Cecil pressed his lips gently to her fair brow, and then they sat down together, and spoke more gravely, and of the future rather than of the present—that future which we so love to shape and colour after our own fancy, crowding it with a thousand incidents that never come to pass ; or so differently, and with such changed feelings, that we scarcely recognise our own fairy imaginings ; looking upon objects with the eye of affection, rather than truth, and thus magnifying them very often at a strange rate ; amusing enough at the time, but the source of much after sorrow, and many bitter tears. Well, we must always pay for pleasure in some shape or other, and be thankful that we can get it even then.

“ Mr. Dummond was right,” thought Amy

that night, as she laid her head upon her pillow,
a head that felt half dizzy with happiness,
"Cecil is wonderfully eloquent!" ah, so are
most lovers, but it will not do to quite believe
them for all that.

CHAPTER VII.

How quickly time flies when we are young, and happy, and beloved! The week had been extended to a fortnight, and Cecil would have still lingered at the rectory, but for his grandfather's expostulations, and a somewhat peremptory letter from Mr. Drummond. Even Amy at length advised his going, although the tears gathered in her dark eyes as she spoke, remem-

bering how sad and lonely it would be when he was gone.

"Oh, that we could be always together," said Cecil.

"And so we shall one of these days I hope."

"And soon—very soon, oh, I will toil so hard that this may come to pass."

"But you must not make yourself ill," said Amy tenderly, for she felt that she had a right now to caution and take care of him. Not a sister's right as of old, but one a thousand times nearer and dearer, the responsibility of which made her feel quite a different creature. It is a responsibility to feel conscious that the happiness of another is in our keeping.

"I see that good Mrs. Jelf has made every preparation for such an event," said Cecil pointing smilingly to the well stocked medicine chest, and goodly store of jams and preserves, which she had sent over that morning, with

orders for Amy to have them carefully packed up.

"Ah! she is a dear, kind soul, but you must not fall sick, and I not near to nurse you."

"Make myself sick by eating all these sweet things I suppose you mean."

"No, working too hard, and keeping late hours. Better to wait a year or two longer, Cecil, than injure your health; besides, grand-papa says we are both very young as yet."

"One would think you were an old woman to hear you talk, Amy."

"But you will not forget what I say? You will take care of yourself for my sake, Cecil?"

"Ah, now you have chosen the right method to bring me round to your own way of thinking, for what is there, Amy, that I would not do for your sake. But there is surely no need for all this hurry!" exclaimed he, appealing to his grandfather, but still watching the small

trembling hands which were arranging every thing with such fairy-like neatness in his port-manteau, and every now and then shedding a few quiet tears, which fell as sweet and soothingly as summer rain.

"Yes, you had better go by the night coach, Cecil, as Mr. Drummond requested," replied the old man in a faltering voice.

"Hang, Mr. Drummond, and the night coach too! Surely a few hours cannot make so much difference."

"Either way," interposed Amy, looking up with a wretched attempt at a smile, and then down again until her tearful face was half buried in the trunk. "There that will do I think," said she after a pause, and in a more cheerful tone. "And although I say it who should not, nothing could have been better arranged, with the night-cap lying at the top, by Mrs. Jelf's special directions."

A good hint by the bye, to all young packers, and inexperienced travellers.

"Thank you, but it will not remain so neat very long. I want some one to look after me sadly."

"Has Mr. Drummond no daughter, or sister?" asked Amy.

"Yes, one daughter, the prettiest and gentlest little creature you can imagine. But then she is that sort of woman who seems only made to be shut up in a glass case for fear of catching cold, or melting away, and looked at when one can find time to indulge in such a luxury."

"For shame, Cecil!" said Amy, who could not help laughing, in spite of her sorrow, at his strange description. "I shall certainly tell Miss Drummond what you have just said, should I ever meet her."

"If it is not all true, you are quite at liberty to do so. But it is not time to cord the box yet."

"Yes, quite time, dear Cecil," said Amy, holding up her watch before his eyes, which

were too dim to be much the wiser for it. She need not have been ashamed to be seen weeping when even he, who was a man could not part from her wholly unmoved.

"It seems but yesterday," continued the girl, "that we sat here watching and waiting for your arrival, and listening and longing for the sound of approaching wheels, as fervently as we now dread them; and yet how very much has come to pass since then. How much, perhaps, before we meet again."

There was a foreboding sadness in the tone with which the last few words were uttered, which struck a responsive chord in the bosom of her lover, as he drew her towards him, and gazed tenderly into her sweet and troubled countenance.

"God is good, my children," said the old rector solemnly, "let us not doubt him."

"Or each other," whispered Amy, in a tone so low that it reached Cecil's ear alone.

“Never, never again dearest! let what will happen.”

Ah, if Cecil Grey had but kept his vow; but we must not anticipate.

Never had the mail seemed more punctual than on that particular evening, or the coachman in a greater hurry. Cecil's portmanteau was hauled up and adjusted in an incredibly short space of time, and then he himself had to follow it, without a moment allowed for those *last words*, which are the dearest of all, and those which linger longest in our memories. For somehow it is not until then we begin to remember all that we had wished and meant to have uttered, and put off until it was too late.

Of course Cecil could not kiss her again, standing as they did at the corner of the high road, and amidst such a crowd of people, although he appeared very much as if he should not have cared had all the world been looking on, and only resisted the temptation out of

delicacy to her, having previously taken good care to indemnify himself for such wonderous self-denial; and with a long trembling pressure of the hand, a few whispered words, and not a few tears on the part of Amy, which she took no pains to conceal, the lovers parted from each other for an indefinite space of time.

Amy and the rector, walked back in silence together for their hearts were full, and each felt as though any effort at consolation would seem like mockery.

"How soon it grows dark to-night," said the former at length, but the shadow was on her own spirit.

"But it promises to be fine nevertheless," replied the rector, "see, the moon is rising."

"And Cecil looking at it too, perhaps at this moment," said Amy, unconsciously thinking aloud. She was growing romantic already, as most girls do when they fall in love for the first time, and a very delicious romance it is, in

spite of all that cynics and sceptics may say to the contrary; and even the most violent among them, it may be, thought so once, but so long ago, perhaps, that they have forgotten it.

“ Yes, the same heaven is above us all,” said Mr. Alleyne solemnly, “ and knowing this my child, we can never be quite miserable, quite separated, even though many a weary mile may lay between us and the object of our affection.”

Amy drew nearer to her old friend, and half forgot her grief in listening to his mild and soothing words.

“ Oh, that I could always stay with you,” said she.

“ I fear you would find it very dull, my child.”

“ Not half so dull as it will be up at the Castle, for we should be talking of Cecil all day long, and that would make the time pass quickly, while there, I shall not dare even to

mention his name, and shall be expected to be as cold and passive as if—as if—I were not the happiest girl in the world,” added Amy with a burst of uncontrollable emotion. “But it is his wish, and best so; and what exquisite delight to have such a secret to keep all to oneself, and no one a bit the wiser.”

“Nevertheless I could have wished to have told the Countess of your engagement.”

“But then as Cecil says, she would only have preached to me ten times more than ever.”

“And what harm would her preaching, as you call it, have done to you?”

“None perhaps, or any good either, but it might have annoyed and vexed me, and I feel as if I ought never to be cross again.”

“Remember this dear child at the right moment and you never will.”

“But if I could stay with you. But I shall find you in the library as usual, and that will be a great comfort; and Cecil has promised to

write to me very, very often, and tell me every thing he is doing, and thinking of, just as if we were still together."

"And you of course are to do the same."

"Oh, yes, I mean to keep a journal for his private inspection."

"You will soon get tired of that," said the old man.

"Did you when you were young, dear grandpapa?"

"Nay, it is so long ago that I forget."

The aged are very apt to do this, and thus hold no sympathy with the warmer feelings of their children, but there are nevertheless some bright examples to the contrary, and Mr. Alleyne was one of them. We know several besides him.

How strange and lonely looked that little parlour, as they partook of the late cheerful meal, lacking Cecil's bright and handsome face to give it zest. How silent, without his brilliant and playful wit; or what Amy missed

even more, the low, eloquent voice, murmuring those haunting words which pass away so slowly from the memory, nay, we doubt much if they are ever really forgotten. Mindful of her promise to Cecil, to supply his place, and be all in all to his venerable relative, the girl strove hard to rally her sinking spirits. She even sang to him, pausing at the close of each song, although there was none but that old man to praise, and singling out the most lively airs, as if she feared to trust her voice with any thing less gay ; and how fervently when the hour of prayer came, was the absent one remembered in their supplications. How delightful it is to pray for those we love ; and be sure that God hears and will do better for us and them, than either we desire or deserve.

That night Amy did not go quietly to bed, and to sleep as usual ; but remained for a long time looking out of her casement, and apparently watching the light clouds as they swept

onwards over the calm heavens, while her thoughts in reality were far away, and had already overtaken the London coach, and made themselves busy about a certain individual who sat thereon, travelling in imagination the very same road which hers had come by, and meeting each other in a sort of sympathy. The spirit of unrest had descended upon the hitherto thoughtless girl, and marked the transition into womanhood.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD DUNORVEN shook hands with Amy, for all the world, as she told Mr. Alleyne afterwards, as if she had been his sister. And said, with such a kind, sweet smile, that he was sure from what his sister had told him, they should be very good friends, that the girl felt certain of it too, from that instant, and answered him in the same frank spirit. As Lady Charlotte had rightly prognosticated, the young heir had .

already wrought a change in the hitherto sombre arrangements of the establishment, in which the sound of merry voices and light laughter, might now be continually heard. Even the school-room was not safe from his presence, and the grave Miss Maxwell, often beguiled of a smile by his merry mood; while Lady Charlotte, who loved him dearly, really learned a great deal quicker when he was by, for fear he might actually get to think her, as he had once playfully hinted, a terrible dunce!

The Countess of Castle Coombe, passing through the great hall, where Amy had been chided for her pirouettes of old, found them all engaged in a noisy game of battledore and shuttlecock, the implements of which Dunorven had somewhere rummaged out, and insisted upon trying the boasted skill of his boyhood, much to the horror of Lady Anne, and the amusement of her sister and Amy; and moved on without a rebuking word, nay, she even smiled as she turned back to gaze upon the

animated countenance of her favourite. And was heard to tell Mrs. Jelf, that she supposed he must be permitted to do as he liked while he stayed, since it might not be very long, as he already talked of leaving them again to join the Earl in London. And the worthy house-keeper was of course the very echo of her ladyship, and offered no opposition to any of the wild schemes, as she thought them, with which he sought to pass away the time.

For the first few days after her return, Amy never could look at Mr. Trevallion without thinking of Cecil's description of the dust-colored moustache; and feeling a wondrous inclination to burst out laughing, although she agreed with Lady Charlotte that he really was very handsome, but for the stern, unconquerable pride so plainly visible upon lip and brow. And was quite thankful to him for taking the quiet Lady Anne's Italian lessons, entirely under his own superintendence; but she did

not fancy they were getting on very fast for all that.

Lord Dunorven's lameness, although obvious, and often painful, was not such as to constitute a deformity, or very materially interfere with his general exercises and amusements. No one indeed, who first glanced upon his singularly winning and open countenance, would have thought of noticing it at all. And if it sometimes prevented him, in the long rambles which the young people took together, from keeping up with Trevallion's hasty strides, and the fleet steps of his sister's, Amy was always willing to loiter behind and bear him company. She had found some one at last, who could really tell her all about Italy, and its sunny skies—its artistic wonders—its dark-eyed children—its glorious climate—its music—and poetry—and describe in glowing colors this dream-land of the imagination! Then he had all the names of its painters at his tongue's end, Titian—Raphael—Buonarroti—Da Vinci—and

a long list of immortal words! Could quote from Tasso and Petrarch, by the hour together. And even pleaded guilty to having attempted an imitation of the latter, as most young men do at some period of their lives, although they will not all confess to it.

"How I should like to see it," said Amy.

"So you shall one of these days, but perhaps I may alter and improve it first, as one writes better from inspiration, and my Laura was at that time an ideal one."

Amy was perfectly unconscious of his earnest gaze, until looking up at length, she fancied he did not seem quite like himself.

"Does your foot pain you?" asked she anxiously.

"Hang my foot! I wish you would not be continually reminding a man of his misfortunes, Miss Fitzallan."

"I beg your pardon," said Amy meekly.

"And I yours for my petulance. And after all, is it a misfortune? since but for that you

would not, perhaps, take pity upon my loneliness so often as you do, and cheer it with that gentle smile."

"But then you would not be so lonely, and so my care and presence be scarcely missed."

"No, no," said Dunorven gaily, "let me make a virtue of necessity, and prefer remaining as I am to being looked upon as coldly and carelessly as Mr. Trevallion."

"And do I look thus?"

"Yes, last night when he praised your singing, and to-day at your Italian lesson."

"Because, somehow, I feared Lady Anne seemed vexed," said Amy simply. "Besides gentlemen must say these things, I suppose, as a matter of course."

"Do you think I too praise you as a matter of course?"

"No," said Amy frankly, "to confess the truth, I do not, for Lady Charlotte tells me you are very sincere, and never say what you

do not mean, and I am sure you are very kind."

"Thank you for your good opinion, which I must study hard to deserve; and dear Charlotte too, for her sisterly encomiums."

"Let me see, what were we talking about?" said Amy after a pause. "Oh! Petrarch's Laura, and then it came to your Laura, but you never told me who she was."

"No, I dare not yet, but one of these days I will."

"You fear, perhaps, that you may change your mind?" said the girl laughingly.

"No indeed!"

"Or that she may be equally cold and passionless?"

"Ah! there is something in that," replied Dunorven in a graver tone. "But was this celebrated woman really so passionless, think you?"

"To him doubtless; but then she might

have loved her husband, which was indeed but natural."

"And yet she must have been proud of the poet's homage."

"But after all, such is not necessary to our happiness," replied Amy, who had grown a great deal wiser on this point within the last few months. "A woman requires love rather than worship!"

Dunorven gazed upon the beautiful countenance of his companion with eyes that almost seemed to offer both; while Amy's perfect unconsciousness saved her from any embarrassment which she might otherwise have felt.

In return for all his vivid descriptions of foreign countries, the girl, won to confidence by his manner, told him all about herself, (her engagement to Cecil of course excepted), and how she dreaded lest her stern grandfather might one day come to claim her. While Dunorven took quite a brotherly interest in the narrative; wishing that he had been in Cecil

Grey's place when he fought the cowardly Stephen Hopkins ; or had the smothering of the old witch, his mother ! as he called her ; promising himself the pleasure of visiting Mrs. Marsh, on the first opportunity, who was in future to be honored with the special patronage of the family at Castle Coombe. Nay, he even went so far as to make a vow, which was unfortunately broken that same day, never again to laugh at good, formal Mrs. Jelf ; and regretted having neglected to make Cecil's acquaintance, during his short stay in the neighbourhood.

" You must introduce him to me when he comes again," said Dunorven, and Amy promised that she would, although she did not think, somehow, that they would ever be very good friends.

" As for Mr. Alleyne," continued the young lord, " I shall like him better than ever, if indeed that were possible."

" There are some people," said Amy, " whom

one cannot help liking." Was she thinking of the good rector, or her present companion? Most certainly his thoughts were all on her, when he answered with such eagerness in the affirmative.

"Who knows," said Lord Dunorven, "but what you may turn out to be some princess?"

"Or the Queen of No-land!" answered Amy merrily. "But is it not equally likely to prove the contrary?"

"Certainly not, your air and manner is decidedly aristocratic; even my proud mamma allowed that the other day, when Trevallion said you reminded him strongly of some one, but he could not recollect who—and then every one seems to agree in believing that your mother was a real lady."

"Oh! yes, so graceful — so beautiful! although pale and sad. I often see her now in my dreams, and ever with the same sweet smile."

"Then that point is settled," said her com-

panion, "and this dreaded grandfather may be the great Mogul himself! or else

'Some terrible, three-tailed Bashaw!'

But never mind, Miss Fitzallan, he shall not carry you away to his enchanted Castle for all that."

"Oh! I hope not, though it should prove to be a palace!" said Amy earnestly.

"Do you mean to say that you would rather stay here than be made a queen?"

"A thousand times rather!" replied the girl in a tone that left no doubt as to her sincerity. While Dunorven, man like, drew his own conclusions from her frankness, and was, as he deserved to be, deceived and disappointed.

"Did you see Miss St. Aubyn again after we quitted Italy?" asked Lady Charlotte of her brother, as they were walking together on the terrace.

"No, but I heard of her, and her kindness to some poor peasants, who had lost their all by

a fearful accident. I do believe her to be a good little soul, only awfully tedious and sentimental, and if there is one thing that I hate in a woman more than another it is that. I think I would almost sooner have her as cold and proud as my saintly sister Anne."

"She has not certainly got Anne's beauty, or the graceful vivacity of Miss Fitzallan, but I do not think her so very sentimental."

"Perhaps she gives me all the benefit of it then—or I am prejudiced," added the young man hastily, and with a slight twinge of conscience, "but she really always seemed a terrible bore, and kill-joy! Trevøllion rather admired her, did you not?"

The gentleman addressed was busily engaged just then in pointing out a magnificent sunset to his silent companion, who looked absolutely glorious in its golden light, and so Mr. Trevalion seemed to think, if one might judge from his countenance.

Amy sat a little apart, employed in netting

another purse for Cecil, who had complained that his was wearing out already, although the real truth of the matter was, he liked to be able to fancy in his far off home, that she was still working for, and thinking of him; and had his wish in both respects, if one might judge from the busy fingers, and pensive, yet happy countenance of the young betrothed.

"Were you speaking to me, Dunorven?" asked Mr. Trevallion at length.

"I believe I did do you that honor some half hour or so since."

"I am really very sorry."

"Oh, pray make no apology, my dear fellow, the cause of your inattention is sufficient excuse."

"Yes, the sunset is unusually brilliant to-night," said Lady Anne, with a quickness that was absolutely startling, as proceeding from her, but perhaps she feared lest another meaning might be given to Dunorven's words.

"And my fair sister too," said he laughingly.

"You look like an old picture, Anne, standing in that golden light."

"A questionable sort of compliment, and not half as pretty and poetical as Mr. Trevalion's," said the mischievous Lady Charlotte, "who compared her to a shrined saint."

"Give me a living and breathing woman," exclaimed Dunorven, "before all the saints in the calendar! They make good pictures, but bad companions. Fancy having a wife who is always in the clouds."

"But I am not always in the clouds, brother," expostulated Lady Anne.

"No, my dear little sister, you are a great deal too worldly for that, and I am glad of it; as for Charlotte, she is never any where for two minutes at a time I think," added he, as the giddy girl made a snatch at Amy's purse, and went bounding along the terrace with the latter after her, like two fawns, while Dunorven longed, oh, how much, to follow in the chase.

"What will mamma say," exclaimed Lady Anne, "if she should chance to be looking at us?"

"Be very much shocked I suppose, and good Mrs. Jelf too completely deprived of her presence of mind to be capable of rendering any assistance. Oh that I were you, Trevallion, for one ten minutes!"

"I sometimes wish we could change places all together," replied his friend kindly, "for being naturally less lively I should not feel the deprivation half as much. Only I must stipulate for your two sisters into the bargain, to nurse and take care of me."

Dunorven fancied that he would have mention but one had he dared.

"Oh, you must consult with them about that, who would not perhaps be so willing to make the exchange. What do you say, Anne, to taking charge of him on these conditions?"

"What nonsense you talk!" said his

sister colouring deeply, or else it was the fading sunlight which still lingered on her usually pale cheek.

"There's gratitude, Trevallion, for your kind offer. But here are the culprits tired and out of breath."

Lady Charlotte still retained triumphant possession of her prize, while Amy looked flushed and excited.

"Can I do any thing for you, Miss Fitzallan?"

"Yes, make her give me back my purse," said Amy, appealing to him so naturally that even the grave Lady Anne could scarcely forbear smiling.

"Oh, I cry you mercy! I did not know it was for Dunorven," said Lady Charlotte.

"Is it for me then?" enquired her brother eagerly.

"You must ask Amy."

"No," said the girl briefly, "it is not."

"But perhaps you will make me one for

my disinterested exertions in your behalf?" said Dunorven, who had by this time succeeded in obtaining possession of the object in dispute.

"A true knight requires no bribe," replied Amy, placing her newly recovered treasure carefully in her bosom, that it might be out of harm's way, "and in succouring the distressed merely performs his high and bounden duty. But for all that the damsel rarely forgets to be grateful," she added in a lower voice.

"Then you will not make me one as a gift?"

"I will not promise," said Amy retreating from him, "that your kindness may be the more disinterested."

"But I may hope?"

"Hope on, hope ever!" murmured the girl, unconscious that she was speaking aloud, for his last words had recalled to mind the motto she and Cecil had chosen for themselves so long ago.

"Thank you, I will have the sentence engraven on my shield," whispered Dunorven, while Amy blushed deeply at her own inadvertency, and the consciousness of Lady Charlotte's laughing gaze.

"Mr. Trevallion shall be Anne's champion," said she, "and each knight wear the respective colours of his liege lady."

"With all my heart," said Trevallion eagerly, while the giddy girl snatched a bow of ribbon from her sister's dress, and gave it him as a badge of his office. Of course Lady Anne was too quiet to put herself so much out of the way as to insist very positively on its return, although she did make a faint shew of resistance. And Trevallion, having kissed the trophy with an air of profound respect, and much courtly grace, had the impertinence to ask her to fasten it into his coat for him. Poor Lady Anne, she must have been very helpless indeed, for she could not even stick a pin in without pricking her fingers, and taking as

long about it as though she had been sewing it with a thousand stitches. Her knight, meanwhile, as in duty bound, manifesting a most extraordinary degree of patience, and evidently rather amused than otherwise with her awkward attempts.

"Oh, what will you do, sister," said Lady Charlotte, "when the time comes to equip your true knight in his ponderous armour—bind around his shoulders the scarf woven by your own hand, and baptised with tears, and bid him forth to conquer or to die? Detain him I suppose in gentle dalliance until the fight be over."

"No, indeed," replied the Lady Anne proudly, "lest afterwards I might come to despise him!"

"Bravely spoken!" said Dunorven with a smile. While Trevallian's flashing eyes bespoke a similar admiration. "But what are my colours to be Miss Fitzallan?"

"Green, I suppose," replied Amy, who had by this time recovered her usual arch vivacity.

"What, forsaken? No, no, let it be blue, the symbol of hope, to match the motto which you have given me for my shield."

"I gave you no motto," said Amy. "And was not even thinking of you when I spoke."

"Oh! well then, I took it, which is all the same you know in the end. Just as Trevallion stole that delicate white bow which he is looking so proud about."

"Nay," replied his friend, "I was only the receiver."

"And the receiver is as bad as the thief any day. But what is Charlotte to do for a champion?"

"Take her own part, and care for no one," replied the girl, with a curl of her red lip. "No fear but I shall find a thousand champions if need be."

"I for one," said her brother, drawing her affectionately towards him, "that is if you

will accept of such, which Miss Fitzallan has refused to do."

"No, no, not refused," said Amy, touched by the half reproachful sadness of his tone, and remembering all at once his poor feet, and the cause of the accident, together with his undeviating kindness towards herself. "There, take the ribbon if you like, and let us be friends again;" and as she spoke she untied the sash from about her waist and gave it to him.

"What am I to have all this?" exclaimed the delighted Dunorven, thrusting it somewhat hastily into his bosom at the approach of his lady mother.

"We must allow that Miss Fitzallan does not do things by halves," said Trevallion, and there was something in his tone and manner, which, in spite of Dunorven's thanks, made her feel as if she had done very wrong.

Need we say that there was no mention of this occurrence made in Amy's journal, when

she took it out as usual on that night in the solitude of her own chamber. And yet, what's the use of keeping a journal at all, if one does not set down everything? So the young girl thought, and felt very much inclined to give it up, and write and tell Cecil she had no time. But then he always found time to fulfil any wish of hers, let him be as busy as he would, so it must needs be continued now. We agree with Amy, that journals are very silly things at the time of writing them. Aye, and very sad ones afterwards, she may find out that too, one of these days.

CHAPTER IX.

"A letter for Miss Fitzallan," said Lord Dunorven, entering their usual sitting-room somewhat earlier than usual. "I waylaid the post-boy on purpose to get it, seeing how anxious, and then how disappointed you looked yesterday at the non-appearance of the expected missive."

"Thank you, you are very kind," said Amy

taking it eagerly, and then after a pause letting it drop with a well assumed indifference into her work box. She did not kiss it this time, as she had once done, and clap her hands with such child-like glee; and even good Mrs. Jelf must have been satisfied with the perfect decorum of her manner; and yet she loved Cecil, if possible, a thousand times better than ever, and had a right indeed to do so, but perhaps that was the very reason. It is not the letters which are opened the most eagerly, that are the most dear to us, but those which we love to read when there is no eye to mark the smiles and tears which are ever ready to start at such times for the veriest trifles. We should not however, have envied any one who might have been rash enough to attempt a *tête-à-tête* with Amy on that particular morning, and with the still unopened letter occupying every thought.

“From your brother, I suppose?” said Lady Charlotte archly.

Dunorven looked surprised.

"Oh, I dare say she never told you that she had one, or me either until I found it out."

"Have you a brother, Miss Fitzallan?"

"No, not in reality, but your sister alludes to Mr. Grey, whom I used to call such, being children, and brought up together."

"Yes, I see, it was but natural," said Dunorven, looking much relieved, and as if he understood all about it, while in reality he knew nothing. "And it is this Mr. Grey who writes you all these long letters, and for whom you are netting that pretty purse, I suppose?"

"I suppose it is," said Amy simply, while Lady Charlotte laughed, and her brother, who had only come in for a moment, rejoined Mr. Trevallion, and went out for a drive.

Amy's work was soon flung by, and passing through the long windows which opened on to the terrace, she sped away to read her letter in peace and quietness. And it was not until the third perusal of it that she woke up as it

were from a delicious dream, in which she had heard Cecil's well beloved voice, uttering those very words which looked almost cold upon paper, and exhorting her to be careful of the happiness which he had intrusted so fearlessly and entirely to her keeping.

"Heedless caution," thought the girl, relapsing into her old habit, and pressing the letter repeatedly to her lips, "just as if I could ever forget—ever love him less than I do now! Dear, unbelieving Cecil! would he were here now to witness how willingly—how joyfully, I would yield up all this luxury to share that lonely home which he paints somewhat gloomily!"

There were some portions of the letter however which made Amy thoughtful if not sad, and she sought the good rector in order to communicate to him a portion of its contents, for she had long since managed to get out of showing him the whole epistle, as she had once promised. Not that they had any secrets from

the old man, but the out-pourings of affection are sacred things, and meant in general for but one alone, so that it seems almost like profanation to show them to our nearest and dearest friends.

“ Well, what news from Cecil, my child ?” said he, glancing at the open letter, although her face alone would have been sufficient to apprise him of its reception. “ He is well I hope ?”

“ He tells me so, and working as hard as ever. But who do you think he has met with in London ? Mr. Wolley, who was surgeon here when we first came, and with poor mamma when she died. Oh ! well do I remember even now, his kind voice and manner, so different from all else !”

“ Yes, I recollect he promised to pay the expenses of the funeral, and actually inserted several advertisements in the daily papers. But just then that terrible accident happened which rendered it necessary for him to proceed imme-

diately to London, for the best medical advice, and since then I have seen and heard nothing of him."

"Cecil tells me that soon after his arrival he enclosed the promised sum to Mrs. Hopkins, begging her to take great care of me for the present until he could think of something for my good, but I suppose the packet must have been lost."

"Most likely," replied her equally simple-minded companion, as if parcels ever are lost now-a-days? or at least, very rarely, but then they were both too kind and good themselves, to have the remotest idea that it was just possible, Mrs. Hopkins might actually have received the one in question, without thinking it necessary to say anything about it, especially when there was a prospect of the same sum being paid over again by the good rector.

"Well, I have not yet told you the strangest part of the story, dear grandpapa! It seems that Mr. Wolley actually had an answer to the

advertisements. And was waited upon at his lodgings by an old gentleman, having his face very much muffled up in a handkerchief, but whom he thinks he should recognise again for all that. Cecil says it must have been my real grandfather, for he asked many questions, and seemed surprised, and yet not displeased he thought, at there being no papers or jewels found, or anything which could give a clue to the dark history of the past, for there was a gleam of exulting triumph in his keen, cold eyes. Mr. Wolley gave him every particular, together with the address of Mrs. Hopkins, although I must have left there at that time, and come to reside with you; but he would nevertheless have had little difficulty in finding that out had he taken the trouble to inquire, which it is quite evident he did by the letter which you received so many years afterwards. Mr. Wolley thought to be sure he would go straight to Castle Coombe, and claim me at once, but was prevented from writing the

above particulars, by an offer which he then had to accompany a young gentleman abroad, a milder air having been prescribed as absolutely necessary to his perfect recovery, and there he has been ever since until within the last few months. Thinking no more of the poor orphan in whom he was once so interested, only because she now, as he imagined, no longer required his care. While the mystery of my birth, so far from being solved, seems darker than ever."

"It is certainly very strange!" said the rector musingly.

"There is one thing however," continued Amy, "which I am glad to hear. Mr. Wolley has married a woman of some property, and left his sisters residing together in a snug little cottage in the South of France, where Cecil says one may live almost for nothing. I wish we could all go there too, dear grandpapa!"

"Nay, that is selfish, my child!"

"Yes, I was thinking of myself and not of him."

"A man's theatre," said Mr. Alleyne, "is the world, especially when he is as capable of playing a brilliant part therein, as our dear Cecil! And a woman, although she may long in her heart for some loveful nook where he will be all her own, must be careful never to let the utterance of such a wish be suffered to interfere with his interests and ambition."

"Forgive me," said Amy, "I spoke without thought."

"Nay, it was but natural after all," replied the old man, kissing her uplifted brow.

"Who knows," said the girl, after a pause, and with a slight shudder, "but what I may have met my grandfather dozens and dozens of times, and been as close to him, perhaps, as I am now to you? That he may not be even at this very moment in the neighbourhood, keeping watch upon every action?"

"That is not probable, I think," said the

rector soothingly, "from the little interest he has hitherto evinced in your welfare; or is it likely that you have ever seen him, a stranger, until of late, being but rarely visible in our quiet and unfrequented village."

"But he may have seen me."

Mr. Alleyne thought not, or this unknown relative, let him be ever so stern, could not have failed to be struck with her grace and beauty, and proud to claim so fair a being as his own. But then the good rector's fondness for his adopted child rendered him a somewhat partial judge of these matters.

The Countess of Castle Coombe also received a letter by the same post which had brought Amy's, which caused her much disquietude; and Lord Dunorven being the only person she ever deigned to consult with, or tell anything to, was summoned into her presence immediately on his return from his drive.

"What is it, dear mother?" said he, kissing the white, jewelled hand which rested so fondly

upon his, with an air of assumed gallantry and real affection.

"Your father is about to return to the Castle."

"I am glad of it, for he was looking wretchedly ill when I saw him in London, on my return from the Continent, and I fancied that there was something wild and strange in his manner, which made me anxious to rejoin him, only that he expressly forbade it at present. But that does not make you so vexed and annoyed surely?"

"No, but he expresses his intention of bringing that hateful Mr. Ormington, to stay some time with us, and what is more, entreats, nay almost commands my being civil to him!"

"Which of course you must while he remains your guest," said Lord Dunorven; "and to confess the truth, I never could see any reason for your violent dislike of him."

"You do not know all, Dunorven."

"Do I not; then tell me all, mother! and if

he has ever injured you by word or deed—if you have the slightest ground for this feeling, by heaven, he shall not enter these doors!”

“Hush! hush! dear boy!” said the Countess soothingly, and those flashing eyes grew gentle again as they met hers. “He must come now—it is the Earl’s wish—nay, his command, for he thus expresses himself.”

“But why do you hate Mr. Ormington?” persisted Dunorven.

“He was my suitor before I saw your father.”

“And you refused him. Pshaw! it is he who should complain not you.”

Perhaps the Countess thought so too, in her heart, for it is certain that she had not used him well, and we are all apt to dislike those whom we have injured.

“Why, if you take to hating all who were once suitors for this fair hand, you must include a very great number I am apt to think.”

A slight smile from those still beautiful,

although somewhat scornful lips, rewarded Dunorven for his well timed flattery, although he meant it not as such, for his admiration was both genuine and sincere, and only equalled by his love for that dear mother !

“ I think, Dunorven, that Mr. Ormington is rather a favorite of yours.”

“ Yes, I am apt to like what no one else does, and have an idea from his manner that the feeling is mutual.”

“ He is very rich,” said the Countess musingly, “ and has not a single relative that I ever heard of in the whole world.”

“ More’s the pity,” replied Dunorven, whose own noble nature often blinded him to the worldly plans of others. “ But if you have indeed stated your only objection, I think my father must be obeyed.”

The Countess acquiesced with a sigh.

“ When do they arrive, mother ?”

“ Perhaps to-morrow.”

“ So much the better. I have scarcely

spoken to the Earl since he quitted Italy so abruptly. And long to have a good chat with Mr. Ormington, and give him the medals he so wished to add to his collection, and which I was afterwards fortunate enough to procure. I shall like him better than ever now, for the taste which he has shown in admiring my dear mamma! Although he must have been a great deal too old to entertain very sanguine hopes of a successful issue to his suit. Trevallion tells me that he is becoming quite feeble and more provoking than ever, but then Trevallion is prejudiced."

"Is not your friend a great deal with Lady Anne of late?" said the Countess after a pause.

"Yes, he is teaching her Italian."

"She is but a child certainly," continued the mother in a musing tone, "but I thought he seemed struck with her when we were abroad."

“ He has a fancy, perhaps, for a quiet life !” said Dunorven merrily.

“ Trevallion is of high family, is he not ?”

“ Aye, and as proud as Lucifer ! and as rich as a Jew !”

“ Have you ever heard him say what was his peculiar style of beauty, Dunorven ? For such a man would be very likely to be fastidious.”

“ Yes, he thinks Miss Fitzallan excessively handsome.”

“ Oh, very likely,” replied the Countess carelessly, “ but that is nothing to the purpose. Her style of singing is probably to his taste, nay, he may think her beautiful as Venus for ought I know to the contrary, but depend upon it he would never dream of marrying a portionless and unknown orphan. Poor girl, I often think it would be better for her if she were less lovely and fascinating, not that I believe her to be either ambitious or designing ; good Mr.

Alleyne has brought her up too well for that."

Dunorven walked to the window without reply. While the haughty and aristocratic Countess of Castle Coombe, secure in her pride, never dreamt of danger to him any more than Trevallion. Nay she would have dismissed the idea with scorn had it ever occurred to her, which it did not.

"Hush!" said Dunorven, laying his finger upon his lip, as a wild, rich voice, singing some quaint old strain, rose up from the terrace beneath.

"It is Miss Fitzallan," said her ladyship, "and but for the old fashioned scruples of the good rector, such a voice as that, after a few months' study and cultivation in Italy, would make her fortune."

Dunorven tried to fancy the timid and girlish beauty of Amy's young face, transformed into that of a prima donna, and not being able to realise the vision, began to weave another for

himself, almost equally wild and improbable, and from which he was only aroused by the sudden cessation of the song, followed by the somewhat rebuking tones of Mrs. Jelf, as she gave utterance to what had passed of late almost into a proverb at Castle Coombe.

“What will the Countess say?”

“See how terrible you are,” said the young lord, turning gaily towards his mother, for she was never terrible to him. “Suppose we were to astonish the worthy housekeeper, and reward this fair glee-maiden at the same time,” and as he spoke he snatched a handful of flowers from a vase that stood near.

“No, no,” said the Countess hastily, “Mrs. Jelf is right, the music-room is the proper place for such displays.”

But it was too late, and the fragrant offering had already descended upon the flowing tresses of the somewhat astonished minstrel.

“You will have all the credit of it,” said Dunorven, “seeing that this is your own

private room. Poor Mrs. Jelf looks astonishment, and is actually picking up the flowers, to make sure that they are real, and that she has not been dreaming."

The young man forgot to mention how Amy had also bent down to collect her scattered treasures, which she placed in her bosom with a laughing and triumphant glance towards the disconcerted housekeeper, although doubtless he must have observed that too. For he was wondering within himself whether she would have kissed them with such graceful exultation had she known the hand from which they came.

"There go away now," said the Countess pushing him from her with a smile, yes, a real genuine smile, such as she seldom vouchsafed to any other being on earth, save this idolised son, and would have afforded Amy theme for wonder for a whole week to come. "You have done mischief enough for once. But mind, Dunorven, that I reckon upon you

to take Mr. Ormington as much as possible off my hands during his stay here."

"You shall be obeyed, dear mother, both from duty and inclination, since I cannot bring myself to participate in your dislike, the more especially now that I have learned its cause; and who knows but you may be generous after a time, and forgive the poor old man for having dared to raise his thoughts so high."

"It is not probable that we shall ever be friends," replied the Countess, with a slight accent of scorn, "or that he will even desire it."

"We shall see!" replied Dunorven gaily, as he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER X.

"HAVE you quite finished your letter, Miss Fitzallan?" asked Lord Dunorven, as he joined the little circle after dinner, from which the Countess only was absent, who generally indulged herself with a *siesta* at this period, leaving Miss Maxwell to play propriety, who had indeed little else to do, the advanced age of her pupils emancipating them in a great measure from her mildly exercised authority.

But then she performed the part of duenna so gently and unobtrusively that no one envied her new elevation, or if the truth must be spoken, were even conscious of her presence, until reminded by some faint objection raised against their noisy mirth, or far oftener by the single exclamation of "what will the Countess say?"

"Quite," replied Amy.

"What all four sides?" said Dunorven speaking at random, for he had not even caught a glimpse of it.

"Yes, and crossed after that, with a post-script almost as long as the letter," said the girl merrily.

"I suppose its no use my asking what it was all about?"

Amy shook her head.

"You will not tell me then?"

"Not for worlds," thought she, and Dunorven never guessed, for all that bright and

radiant blush. How should he, when she had told him that Cecil Grey had been like a brother to her. That "had been," it was at once too much and too little.

"Yes, I will tell you something about it," said Amy after a pause, "since I have already told you so much, and you seemed to take so kind an interest in the fortunes of an unknown orphan."

"Seemed. Oh, Miss Fitzallan, what a hard term."

"Nay, if you quarrel with my words I shall be silent."

"Then I will not even speak." Nor did he while Amy told him all about Mr. Wolley, together with her own, and Mr. Alleyne's vague fears and surmises on the subject, while Lady Charlotte wondered what they could be talking together so earnestly about, and had a thousand minds to cross the room and enquire, but remembering the maxim, "do as you

would be done by," thought better of it and retained her seat and book, from which her arch, mischievous glance often wandered to the animated countenances of her companions.

"It is strange indeed," said Lord Dunorven as Amy ceased speaking. "I should like to catch this old grandfather peeping and prying about with his face muffled up. A second man in the iron mask."

"Aye, and as little likely ever to be discovered now," said the girl, "I sometimes think I do not wish it and am very happy as it is, and yet it seems but natural to know something of one's family. It was but the other day I met an old friend of Mr. Alleyne's at the rectory, and his first question upon being introduced was—'One of the Fitzallan's of the Grange, in Yorkshire I presume? I knew the family well in my young days.' 'I believe not,' replied Mr. Alleyne looking at me. 'From Perth then? I should have remembered

that it was a Scotch name.' The rector shook his head again, and I never waited to hear any more, but quitted the room so abruptly that the poor, inquisitive old gentleman imagined he had offended me, and thought it necessary to apologise for it when we met again."

"And very properly too. What business was it of his?"

"Nay, it was but a simple and natural question after all, and he could not dream how difficult I should find it to answer."

"Fitzallan is a very good name," said Dunorven.

"And a very pretty one too for the heroine of a romance. Do you not think so?"

Her companion did not immediately reply, it may be that he did not quite agree with her, and was meditating in his own mind the best possible way of effecting a change therein.

"Did you know any thing of Mr. Wolley?" asked Amy at length, despairing of getting any reply to her previous question.

“Not that I can remember, but have a dim recollection of kindnesses received from his maiden sisters, in the shape of sugar plums, &c. and being sorry when I heard of his sad accident. Let me see, he broke his leg, did he not?”

“I believe so,” said Amy, regretting the turn which the conversation had taken.

“And you say he is married now?”

“Yes, and Mr. Grey speaks of his wife in terms of the highest praise.”

It was a marvel how Amy could always recollect to say Mr. Grey with such a steady look, instead of Cecil, or dear Cecil, as she had used, but then she made up for the omission when alone with the good rector, or when she poured out the revealings of her pure and affectionate heart upon paper, and sent it to gladden that of her betrothed.

“There are some women in the world then who have no objection to a lame husband limp-

ing beside them all their lives?" said Dunorven with a painful attempt at gaiety.

"Oh, yes thousands—be sure of that," said Amy quickly, and thinking only of soothing the wounded and irritable feelings of her companion, which the eagerness of her voice and manner succeeded wonderfully in effecting.

"And could you, Amy?" whispered Dunorven, with a flushed cheek. Until then he had never called her anything but Miss Fitzallan, but she marked not the difference, her thoughts were far away, with him who had last put that question to her, half in sorrow, half in anger, and answered carelessly—

"Very likely, but I have never thought about it."

"And will you begin to think about it now?" Dunorven was just going to add, in those passionate tones which must at once have awakened the unconscious girl to the real state

of his feelings, but he checked himself abruptly, and turned away in silence.

Was it the remembrance of his mother's words which had wrought this change—the fear of her displeasure? It may be, for he loved her dearly, but then Amy had also become very dear to him. It is a weary struggle when we have to decide between duty and affection, in which the latter too often, in spite of all our high resolves, somehow manages to gain the mastery. Amy fancying that he was offended with her, began to be very sorry indeed, for she did like Dunorven, and was grateful beside for his unvarying kindness, from the first hour they had met.

“Are you angry with me?” said she in a low voice.

“No, why should you think so?”

“I fancied you looked cross,” said the girl, half laughingly, now that she saw it had been nothing else but her own imagination, or her

"evil conscience," as he called it, catching and imitating her playful humour, and resolving to enjoy the happiness of the present, leaving the future to take care of itself; a wise resolution in which the young are very apt to indulge, gathering flowers upon the very edge of that precipice, down which one false step might hurl them to destruction.

"And did you mean to bribe me into good humour again with this purse when it is finished?" asked Dunorven.

"I do not know," replied the girl evasively, thinking perhaps that Cecil might not like it, and feeling quite sure that she should not be able to insert any record of the gift in her journal, while that hesitating reply gave fresh confidence to her companion to urge his suit.

"Still that unfortunate purse!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte, tired of sitting quiet for so long, her sister being engaged at the further

end of the room, translating some new Italian poem, with the aid of the dictionary and Mr. Trevallion. "I am sure I would promise it to him just to keep him quiet."

"Well, just to keep you quiet then," said Amy playfully.

"Nay, we will have no cheating, Charlotte, a promise is a promise; and if Miss Fitzallan does not keep hers I shall be forced to call you up as a witness. But Trevallion, my dear fellow, why have you closed your book? are we making too much noise? and what does my little sister look so grave about?"

"I was merely mentioning to Lady Anne the necessity there was for my return to London, having already trespassed sufficiently long upon your hospitality, and seeing no chance now of your being likely to bear me company as we had agreed."

"Nonsense, Trevallion, the necessity exists only in your own pride. We will tell you when we are tired of you, wont we, Anne?"

- Lady Charlotte did not think that her sister would exert herself sufficiently for that, and perhaps she was right.

"Besides," continued his friend, "I shall want you to help keep Mr. Ormington in good humour; and I am sure that is employment for two people at any time."

"Suppose we turn him over to the ladies," said Trevallion, while Lady Charlotte uttered a faint scream at the bare idea of such a thing, and her sister shuddered without knowing why.

"Is this Mr. Ormington so very terrible then?" enquired Amy.

"A perfect bear, who ought to be chained up, and only suffered to go so far and no farther; and then he would be growling all day long."

"No, no, Charlotte, to do him justice he is pretty quiet when not irritated. But the real fact of the matter is, Miss Fitzallan, that I

suspect Mr. Ormington has been in more cases than one a disappointed man, and is to be pitied rather than disliked."

"Ah, Dunorven always sees every thing on the bright side," said his sister affectionately.

"Well, but Trevallion," continued his lordship, "you are not going to desert us just at this dangerous crisis, when the wild animal is about to be let loose? Remember that Anne has a right to command your stay, should it be her sovereign will and pleasure so to do, even by virtue of a certain spotless bow, transferred from your coat to your heart I suppose. What do you say to exerting your authority, sweet sister?"

Trevallion looked strangely anxious for the reply which came so lingeringly from those beautiful lips.

"It is not a woman's place to command brother."

"I don't know that," said Lady Charlotte

wilfully, who was something of a tyrant at heart. Woe to the man who ventures to fall in love with that mischievous little face; and yet she will make a fond affectionate wife too, these wild spirits generally do in the end.

"Well, only deign to request, fair queen!" said Trevallion kneeling before her in mock reverence, and with singular grace.

"Nay, I give you free permission to follow your own will and pleasure," replied Lady Anne somewhat haughtily.

"But what if my will and pleasure should only be to do yours?" said her knight bowing his stately head.

"Then stay," whispered the girl in a gentler tone, and he stayed.

"So that point is settled," said Dunorven, who was really attached to his friend in spite of the wide difference between their thoughts and pursuits, and fancied too that Anne would have missed him very much at her Italian

lessons, good natured brother that he was. "I wish you would lay some command upon me, Miss Fitzallan,"

' To fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds, to thy strong bidding task,
Ariel, and all his quality.'

" Canst,

' Put a girdle round, about the earth
In forty minutes! ' "

asked Amy in the same spirit.

" I'd try to please thee."

" No, no, I am more easily pleased I hope."

" Or question my ability, perhaps? Truly I should make but a poor Ariel—a Caliban rather."

" Hush!" said Amy soothingly, " you must not talk thus."

" Besides," observed Trevallion, " Walter Scott was lame, and Byron too, and yet how many loved them."

"And how many the latter loved," interrupted Lady Charlotte mischievously.

"You are all very kind, and I am very silly," said Dunorven a little ashamed of the emotion he had betrayed. "I am glad that poor Miss St. Aubyn was not by, or she would have been grieved to see how much I take this trifling accident to heart."

"Always thinking of some one else, my dear good-natured brother," said Lady Charlotte caressingly, while even the silent Anne slipped her little white hand into his, and looked upon him so fondly, that Trevallion would have been too glad to change places.

"Nay, I was selfish enough just now. But it was all that wild fellow Shakespear's fault. Hang him!"

"With all my heart," replied Trevallion laughingly, "provided it be where one may easily reach him down when they want him. Certainly not else."

"And yet how provoking to read those

spirit stirring descriptions which make the blood leap madly in our veins, giving us in imagination a giant's strength to achieve some noble deed ; and yet be chained and fettered down to earth by this useless incumbrance. But I am relapsing again."

"The best way to effect a cure," said his friend, "is not by waging war against this glorious author, but confining yourself for the present to scenes of love rather than excitement, which you will find equally, if not more exquisite and inspiring ; and it may be," added he with a meaning look, "that Miss Fitzallan will be able to assist you in the selection."

"With all my heart," said Amy. Was she really so very simple ? Yes, in truth, for she loved Cecil so well, that the possibility of any other attachment had never once entered her mind.

Trevallion looked puzzled, and Lady Charlotte laughed heartily, and still louder at Amy's glance of innocent surprise. While Lord

Dunorven did not seem quite pleased, and would have infinitely preferred a little hesitation, and a few blushes, aye even though they were the herald of a faint negative, which he would have known better than to have believed, to her straightforward and unembarrassed reply.

"Suppose we begin at once then," said he abruptly, taking up the book which lay near them. We cannot fancy a sitting-room without its Shakespeare. "What say you to 'Romeo and Juliet?'"

"No, no, that was made to be read only at moonlight, not in the garish light of day!" replied Amy. "That is supposing one's eyes good enough to distinguish this small print."

"But could you not say it from memory?"

"By heart he means," suggested Trevallion.

"No indeed," replied the girl quietly. While Dunorven thought that she was positively getting almost as provoking as his sister Anne.

"Well, make your own selection," said he.

"Then let it be 'Much Ado about Nothing!'"

"And Dunorven play Benedict to your Beatrice, I suppose?" said Trevallion. "But you remember how all their playful skirmishes of wit ended at last, Miss Fitzallan?"

"Oh! yes," replied Amy, coloring a little for the first time, and not so much at the words themselves, as the tone in which they were uttered. "But we need not go quite to the end, you know, unless we like."

"She really is an extraordinary girl," thought Trevallion, "and beautiful enough to excuse Dunorven's silly devotion, which will of course pass away all in good time, when he is tired of the excitement which she takes care to afford him by her well assumed indifference. And yet I wish for all that, he were well rid of the spell of her presence, and was going back to town as he originally intended."

"Come, Mr. Trevallion," said Amy, who

owed him some little retaliation, although very far from fathoming the dark and worldly thoughts which were sweeping over his mind, at that instant. "You are not going to get out of it so easily, for I mean you to play Count Claudio, and the Lady Anne must be the gentle Hero!"

" 'What Leonato's short daughter!' " said Lady Charlotte clapping her hands.

" 'In mine eye,' " replied Trevallion promptly, " 'she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked upon.' "

"Aptly quoted," replied his friend. "And see how Hero glances down upon the ground, and smiles, even while trying to put up her pretty lip, as though she would pout and be cross if she could. "They will beat us, my fair Beatrice! if we are not careful."

" 'I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedict; nobody marks you!' " replied Amy, glancing at Trevallion, who had bent down to whisper something to his silent com-

panion, which would probably not have been found in the book, had they searched for it ever so deeply.

“ At least, you are saucy and beautiful enough to look your character to perfection,” said Dunorven, following the example set him, and indulging in a stage aside, which Lady Charlotte at least overheard by that merry laugh.

“ Yes, and play it too, you shall see, or rather, you should see if we had time, but here comes your lady mother, who may not, perhaps, approve of our private theatricals.”

Her companion thought that it was most probable, and the book was quietly replaced.

“ Dear—delightful old Shakespeare ! how many such bright, happy hours as this hast thou afforded us ! And will do again we hope.”

The time had passed when the presence of the stately Countess had forced Lady Charlotte to have recourse to the cover of some noisy

overture, in order that she might dare to speak aloud; and Amy half dreaded, and yet half enjoyed the long, dull, silent evenings which left her free to indulge in the quiet luxury of her own glad thoughts; but even now it shed a certain restraint, which on the night in question seemed to fall upon Dunorven as much as the rest, he who was in general too buoyant and light-hearted to care for ought, and too conscious of her love, to have any fear of her frown. Why was this? What made him so sad and thoughtful? So that even Amy had to speak twice to him before he replied; and hang the skein of silk she was winding, upon the back of the opposite chair, while he never once offered to hold it for her, although it was continually getting into knots and tangles, and would have been utterly spoiled if Miss Maxwell had not taken pity upon her at last, and helped to set all to rights.

“Now he shall not have the purse, just to punish him,” thought the young girl. But

when she looked again, pity got the better of vexation, and she fancied that his foot was very likely more than usually painful, only that he was too proud to complain. But Amy was wrong, the pain was in his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. ORMINGTON arrived in due time at Castle Coombe, where he was received by the Countess, with a chilling haughtiness of manner scarcely equal to his own. Dunorven's greeting was frank and cordial, perhaps, as he had said, even more so than usual. While Lady Anne made no attempt to conceal her dislike, and her sister was only prevented from similar manifestations by the dark frown which had

gathered upon the stern brow of the Earl. Of course Amy was merely introduced, and received in return a cold, chilling bow, and a keen, quick glance, which left no very favourable impression on her mind.

As the Countess had hinted, Mr. Ormington was immensely rich, and of a noble and ancient lineage, the last branch of which would become extinct in himself. And strange and eccentric as he was, many a bright eye and winning smile beamed kindly upon the old man, but rather, we fear, for the sake of his gold than himself, for he was too cold and unsympathizing to make many real friends. Although not a professed gamester, that pale face and bowed form had long been recognised as an occasional frequenter of most of the fashionable gambling houses at home and abroad. At which time he generally staked high and recklessly, yet ever won, as by a fatality, for he wanted not the money, which was usually swept into his pocket

with a careless indifference; and more than once, it had been hinted, returned in secret to the respective owners. Certain it is that he was by no means avaricious, but lived up to his income, nay above it sometimes, or it must have been a pretty large one; keeping open house for all his young and bachelor acquaintances, (of which of course he had plenty), and giving such sumptuous entertainments that few could attempt to vie with them in magnificence.

Until within the last twelvemonth he had always seemed rather to shun than seek the society of the Earl of Castle Coombe, but since then they had been much together. And the Earl, in the interval, appeared to have grown almost as cold, and pale, and moody, as his wayward companion, and was in every respect a changed man. Proud and imperious to all others, there was something servile and almost fawning in the tone and manner with

which he would turn to address his guest, or listen to the slightest word which fell from those pale, scornful lips, and without retaliating, or seeming to heed the cutting irony which none but himself could understand, although at such times his spirit burned within him.

The Countess followed her husband to his dressing room with an anxious countenance; not that she loved him so much, for their marriage had been one of ambition rather than affection, but a vague fear of she knew not what, oppressed and weighed down her usually high and haughty spirit.

"You received my letter?" said he abruptly.

"I did."

"And this is the way that you obey it! But those proud girls must be taught a different lesson, or it may be forced upon them sooner than they think for."

"Mr. Ormington is but a plebeian after all, in spite of his wealth," said the Countess

scornfully, "and cannot expect that we should do him homage like a prince!"

"Nevertheless, I will have it so! Henriette, you are standing on the brink of a precipice — and that man is your fate!"

His companion shuddered. Ormington himself had said those very words to her, now nearly thirty years since, when she rejected with such bitter scorn, a suit previously encouraged, merely to while away an idle hour. And now they came back to her like a prophesy!

"Be it so," said she, with unabated spirit. "Still do I defy him!"

"Beware!" exclaimed her husband, his very lips livid with passion. "I tell you there must be no sneers, or frown, or wild defiance now. For your son's sake I bid you beware!"

"What of Dunorven?" said the mother anxiously, for he had touched upon the right chord to sway her to his will.

“ Nothing, perhaps ; Ormington seems to like the boy, and therein lays our only chance of safety.”

“ Now for heaven’s sake explain yourself !” entreated his agitated companion. But no explanation came, only those warning words. He dared not tell her all, lest, like himself, she might have gone well nigh mad—lest she should even have cursed him in her agony and despair, for the fearful desolation he had wrought !

No traces of her recent agitation were visible upon the still beautiful countenance of the Countess of Castle Coombe, upon her return to the usual sitting room, looking as calmly cold, although it may be a thought prouder than ever.

Dunorven was displaying the medals which he had procured for his old friend, who gazed on them with the critical eye of a connoisseur. Lady Anne sat at her eternal Italian ! as her

sister called it, and Trevallion lingering as usual by her side, and having all the talk to himself it would seem, so rarely was it that his fair companion either looked up or spoke. Lady Charlotte might also have said, that eternal purse, only that it was "another yet the same" upon which Amy was now so industriously employed. Was it for Dunorven? She had not quite made up her mind yet.

Mrs. Jelf was right in having long ago given up all hope of taming that wild spirit in utter despair, for even now in spite of the presence of the stately Countess, she had flung aside her work, and started up with a cry of joy upon recognising Mr. Alleyne in the distance, coming across the lawn towards the house. Not that it was altogether affection for the good old rector, which rendered her so impatient, but she was expecting a letter from Cecil.

"Miss Fitzallan!" exclaimed her patroness in a cold, rebuking tone, which made her pause suddenly in her meditated flight.

"It is my grandpapa," said the girl, with an excusing look, "and I have not seen him for so long."

"Almost three days!" suggested Lady Charlotte aside, while Mr. Ormington suffered the medal he was examining to drop from his hands, while his eyes remained rivetted as if by a species of fascination upon Amy's glowing face.

"Go to him now," said the Countess condescendingly, "I never wish to detain you from good Mr. Alleyne, who so well deserves all your gratitude. But you would have reached him quite time enough without that theatrical start and scream."

"And you know mamma did not approve of private theatricals," whispered the mischievous Lady Charlotte.

Amy drew down the corners of her arch and dimpling mouth, to prevent it breaking into a smile, and walked away with a step strangely

at variance with her joyous and beaming face, still followed by the earnest gaze of Mr. Ormington, which none noticed but Dunorven, who was struck with the sudden hope of interesting the sympathies of his companion in the cause of this young and friendless orphan, never once suspecting the absence of any such feeling in his hard, and withered heart. "Who knows," thought he, with all the sanguine hopefulness of youth, "but what he may in time take quite a fancy to her, and leave her some of the superfluous wealth which would otherwise only go to build hospitals and endow churches." Dunorven never once remembered himself when he reasoned thus, or the evident partiality of this eccentric old man; neither did it enter his head at that time, that Amy's becoming Mr. Ormington's heiress might remove some of the insurmountable difficulties which lay in the way of his ever hoping to gain the consent of his proud mother, to what she would deem so unequal a match.

In pursuance of his disinterested scheme, Dunorven immediately began speaking of Miss Fitzallan, of her gentleness and strange beauty, relating such portions of her early and mysterious history as seemed likely to interest his companion in her behalf, to all of which the old man listened patiently, nay, almost eagerly, with a cold, triumphant smile upon his withered brow.

"What! won't he write? naughty brother!" whispered Dunorven, as Amy returned with a somewhat graver face, although she could not help laughing at his droll manner. "It's too bad positively."

"Mr. Grey is very busy just now," replied the girl, who never allowed any one to blame him even in sport, but herself, and there was no great fear of that happening very often.

"Is that Mr. Cecil Grey, of whom report speaks so highly, as one of the most promising young men of the day?" asked Mr. Ormington.

"Oh, yes that must be Cecil, do you know him?" enquired Amy eagerly, and quite forgetful of her former terrors.

"I do not think I can exactly boast of having that honour," replied the old man, "but I have seen him several times lately in London."

"Was he well? did he look well?" asked the impatient girl, much to Dunorven's annoyance, although after all it was but natural that she should be a little anxious about the brother whom she had not seen for so long.

"I cannot answer for his looks," replied Mr. Ormington in slow and measured tones, "but Mr. Grey always seemed in excellent spirits whenever I saw him, and most attentive and devoted to the fair companion of his walks and drives."

"Miss Drummond, I suppose," said Amy, laughing merrily at the recollection of Cecil's description of her; a laugh which seemed to

puzzle Mr. Ormington as much as it gratified and delighted Dunorven.

"She does not love him," thought he, "or this report would have given her some uneasiness." But he was wrong, Amy did love Cecil, and therefore trusted him, for such is woman's devotion.

"They say too," observed Mr. Ormington, in the same unmoved voice, "that Mr. Grey is shortly to be united to the daughter of his patron."

But still the young girl laughed on in happy consciousness of her own secret knowledge to the contrary.

After dinner Amy went, at Mrs. Jelf's request, down into the village, to carry some wine and other restoratives to a poor woman, a stranger in the place, who had been suddenly seized with a dangerous illness, from which she was now slowly recovering, and more than ever requiring those nourishing things which those with whom she lodged were totally unable to

afford her, had they even been willing so to do. She was still too weak to rise, and lay propped up with pillows, and pale from recent suffering.

"Do you feel better to-day?" asked Amy, in her ever gentle voice, as she approached the bed in order to administer some of the comforts she had brought.

"No—worse I think. But why did she send you?" said the woman a little wildly, fixing her large, hollow eyes earnestly upon the face of our heroine.

"Mrs. Jelf was too busy to come herself, but she will most likely be here to-morrow. Shall I give you a little wine?"

"Take it away, oh take it away!" exclaimed the invalid in an excited tone. "I could not touch a drop—it would choke me!"

"I fear that you are not so well," said Amy soothingly, thinking indeed that the fever had returned, and it was better not to give her wine in her present state.

“Go away,” repeated the woman pushing aside the cooling fruits which she continued to hold before her so temptingly. “Go away! I shall be better then.”

Amy thought it best to comply with her wish, and immediately retired, having first summoned the woman of the house, to whom she expressed her fears that her patient was worse.

“It’s only the effects of the fever, Miss, as I think,” said the woman, “which makes her a bit light-headed still. It will all come right in time, when she gets a little stronger.”

The girl replied that she hoped so, and turned away wondering where she could have seen the countenance of the invalid before, for somehow it seemed strangely familiar. Until her meditations were suddenly interrupted by the cheerful voice of Lord Dunorven.

“Why I thought I left you safe at the Castle, about to play chess with Mr. Trevalion?” said the astonished girl.

"Yes, so you did, but afterwards I persuaded Anne to take my place, and learning where you had gone, from good Mrs. Jelf, (quite by accident though) followed, for the sole pleasure of walking back with you."

"Thank you, you are very kind," said Amy, who would just as soon however that he had not come. "But you look tired."

"Yes, it is a good step for me, so I mean to indulge myself with a rest at Mrs. Marsh's and coax her into giving me some of your favorite cakes."

"What will the Countess say!" exclaimed the girl, unconsciously repeating in her surprise and bewilderment what Lady Charlotte was wont to call the watchword of Castle Coombe.

"Nay, she will never hear of it, and if she does she would only be a little shocked. We must fancy it a London pastry-cook's, that is all."

"Which I cannot do unfortunately, from never having been there."

“ Ah, I had forgotten. Well, then I will only just remember that the good baker’s wife was kind to you, Amy, when you needed it most, and that will make me love and honor her.”

The girl looked at him with glistening eyes, and seeing that he was really fatigued made no further objection to a scheme upon which he seemed to have set his whole heart.

Who so proud as Mrs. Marsh upon that eventful evening? to have a real lord and the heir of Castle Coombe, sitting in her little back parlour, “ and talking as cheerful and familiar-like,” as the good woman expressed it, “ as though he had been her equal. Devouring her favorite cakes at an amazing rate, taking her gooseberry wine for champaign, and adhering with such agreeable pertinacity to his own opinion, that she soon gave over arguing with him, and looking all the while as sweet and kind upon Miss Amy, just as if they had been lovers, which they might be for ought she could see to the contrary.

Good Mrs. Marsh had a theory very common with simple minds such as hers, that love is the only true leveller of all petty distinctions of rank and station, and would not have wondered much at any vagary which the sly little god might have taken it into his head to have worked. She had read the popular story of the beggar-girl, who was married to a great prince, "and lived happy ever after," a dozen times at least, and believed in it almost as religiously as she did in her bible.

Amy was the first to think of the lateness of the hour, and propose their return, to which her companion, after making a thousand excuses for further delay, most unwillingly consented.

"I wish for your sake, Mrs. Marsh, that I were a prince instead of being merely a simple lord," said Dunorven as their delighted hostess followed them out, dropping courtesy upon courtesy at every step. "For in that case you should have my gracious permission to put up

forthwith a coat-of-arms over the door, and take out a royal patent for these delicious cakes."

"I wish it too, I am sure with all my heart," replied the baker's wife with blunt sincerity.

"But then Miss Fitzallan must be queen," said Lord Dunorven glancing at his companion.

"To be sure," said the thoughtless Amy gaily, "I am glad you remembered that."

"And a splendid couple you would make, worthy to fill any throne in Christendom," thought Mrs. Marsh, who for once however recollected herself in time, and had the prudence to keep the opinion to herself. Not that she fancied somehow the young lord would have been very much displeased with it, or Miss Amy either, although she did look so innocent and unconscious, as she took his proffered arm quite naturally, and turned back to nod and smile a good night to her old friend.

“ And yet I did think at one time,” murmured the good baker’s wife, as she stood at her shop door to watch them out of sight, “ I did think that she would have had Cecil Grey; although to be sure they always called one another brother and sister, and people seldom do marry those with whom they have been brought up, perhaps because they see too much of them; but then I cannot fancy any one seeing too much of Miss Amy; as for the young lord, he is quite worthy of her, (this was the highest compliment Mrs. Marsh could have paid any one), and his poor lame foot will only make her love him all the more. God bless them both, say I, and may they be as happy as they deserve !”

Was it the influence of that honest blessing, or the calm tranquillity of the evening, which shed such a sweet and happy serenity over the minds of each, as they slowly retraced their steps to the Castle? Entering the usual sitting room with countenances glowing with health

and exercise, while a gleam of vindictive triumph lit up the cold grey eyes of Mr. Ormington as he gazed upon them.

"I hope you have had a pleasant walk, Miss Fitzallan," said Trevallion looking up from the chess-board, by which he had continued to remain all that long summer evening, although Dunorven thought it strange that the pieces should be still standing just where he had left them when he gave up his seat to Lady Anna.

"Very indeed," replied Amy readily.

"The moonlight was favorable I suppose to your first rehearsal?"

"What, Romeo and Juliet you mean—we never once thought about it! How silly," added Amy, "for we may not have such a chance again."

The intended satire of the man of the world was once again baffled by her simple candour; and he turned away with a slight shrug and incredulous smile, while Dunorven continued to gaze upon the unconscious Amy, with an

air of undisguised admiration. And Mr. Ormington chuckled to himself with a laugh which it was fearful to listen to, so much of malice was there mingled with its strange glee.

CHAPTER XII.

It was a bright summer evening, and the Earl and Countess stood together by the drawing-room window overlooking the lawn, whither the younger branches of the family had betaken themselves, the better to enjoy its beauty. In the centre of the room sat Mr. Ormington, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of a book of rare prints, which Dunorven, ever

thoughtful of others, had procured for his amusement before he went to his own.

"I have never yet found time," said the Earl, "to enquire who this girl—this Miss Fitzallan is, who seems so quietly domesticated in your family."

"And I could not have told you if you had; only that she is an orphan, and adopted by our good, and simple-minded rector years ago, as his own child. It was his intention at one time I believe to bring her up for a governess, but he has changed his mind of late, perhaps he thinks her too pretty, or as I shrewdly suspect from what I observed during a recent visit from his grandson, there is some engagement between the young people."

"Pshaw!" said the Earl, "Miss Fitzallan is not so easily satisfied, if I mistake me not her ambition falls little short of a coronet."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Countess changing colour, "is it so? But no, Dunorven may

admire her, he may think her beautiful, as she certainly is, but he would never dream of marrying Amy Fitzallan."

"Young men at his age dream strange things sometimes," said the Earl coldly. "Look at them now."

His companion did look, and her conviction of the truth of her husband's suspicions was confirmed. While at the same time came the recollection of her folly and blindness in having suffered matters to proceed thus far; misled by her own aristocratic pride of rank, into a belief that all must necessarily share in the feeling.

"She leaves the Castle this very night," exclaimed the Countess in a voice hoarse with passion.

"Beware," said her husband, "how you add the charm of opposition to a spell which already works powerfully enough. But nevertheless I think you are right, if it can be managed quietly and without suspicion."

“Leave that to me,” replied the Countess,
“I will see about it immediately.”

Mr. Ormington looked up as she swept past him with a white cheek and quivering lip, and smiled in mingled scorn and triumph, and then turning to the Earl, said in his usually cold and measured tones—

“Her ladyship is about to give herself unnecessary trouble concerning this little affair, which after all may not turn out so badly as you think for. At any rate Miss Fitzallan remains at Castle Coombe for the present, I like to look at her bright face, and hear her merry laugh, it is something new, and amuses me. If Dunorven should happen to be of the same opinion it speaks well for his taste.”

The usually stern brow of the Earl, grew dark and livid while the veins stood out thereon as though they would burst with the terrible and suppressed passions of his soul, but he answered not. And from that hour no more was

said about Amy's departure by either himself or the Countess. It is true they had a long and private conference together, from which the wretched wife came forth with the added weight of years upon her bowed and drooping head. But in answer to Dunorven's affectionate enquiries, she only complained of a slight indisposition, carefully avoiding the flashing eyes of her strange guest, who looked unusually cheerful and elated. And keeping a strict and vigilant watch upon every word and action of the unconscious Amy.

The only means which were then taken to avert the danger she so much dreaded, was a letter dispatched that same night to Miss St. Aubyn, inviting her to Castle Coombe. For the Countess, with all a woman's penetration, where her own sex are concerned, had already discovered the poor girl's hopeless attachment to her son, and sincerely trusted that it might in time win some return, while the principal

thing which consoled her was a conviction that Amy, however much Lord Dunorven might admire her, was as yet perfectly unaware of the conquest she had made.

It so happened a few evenings after this that the conversation chanced to turn upon unequal alliances, which Trevallion maintained had never yet been found to be productive of real happiness; while his friend seemed very much inclined to dispute the point.

"I grant," said Dunorven, "that it must be mortifying enough for a man to owe everything to his wife, and still more so for there to be the shadow of a probability that she may learn in time to look down upon him, even if she does not do so at present in the secret recesses of her heart."

"As if that were possible!" said Amy, "if she loves him, that is."

"But taking the other extreme case, what have you to say about that, Miss Fitzallan?"

asked Mr. Trevallion with a meaning look, which was however entirely thrown away on the present occasion, at least upon her.

“That it seems but natural for a woman to owe everything to him she loves!”

“Exactly so!” exclaimed the delighted Dunorven, his glittering eyes resting fondly on her fair young face.

“And yet,” continued Amy, half unconsciously following out the tangled chain of her own thoughts and reminiscences, “there was a time when I reasoned far differently, and fancied it must be a fine thing to be a queen! But it is pleasanter after all to receive, than to confer—at least, from some people.”

“And what, if I may enquire, wrought this change in your sentiments?” asked Trevallion with a sneer.

“I don’t know exactly, but I suppose it was the daily increasing conviction of man’s indomitable pride.” And Amy thought of Cecil while she spoke.

“ Depend upon it ;” said Trevallion, “ with all due deference to Miss Fitzallan’s very pretty theory, which is fitted however, more for poetry than the common prose of every day life, that the man who marries a woman beneath him in the scale of society, for we will not now argue that of intellect, which is perhaps, only one degree worse, must necessarily be wretched !”

How the Countess blessed him in her heart for those words !

“ In the latter case I admit it may be so,” replied Dunorven.

“ Nay, we will confine ourself simply to the former if you please.”

“ Well then I deny it altogether, and defy you to prove your words !”

“ Would it were less easily done,” replied Trevallion, “ and that fewer desolated homes, and broken hearts, bore record to the fact.”

“ First of all there was Griselda,” interrupted Lady Charlotte merrily, “ she married

a man far above her in rank and station, and what a life he led her in consequence! which he would not have dared to do had she been nobly born like himself, with a host of bold barons and warlike knights to call him out!"

"And yet," said Amy, "with her meek and patient spirit and her loving heart, she was not quite unhappy for all that."

"Then Fatima must needs be persuaded into marrying that rich old Turk Bluebeard! And narrowly escaped with her head!"

"But might not that have been half in punishment for so soon forgetting one of the most essential portions of her marriage vow—obedience?" asked Amy with mock gravity.

"Yet even in these silly nursery tales, which your sister is so apt in quoting," said Trevallion.

"A prince rarely or never marries a Cinderella, without her turning out in the end to be a princess too, of equal birth with himself, thus preserving the moral of the story."

“To be sure,” added Lady Charlotte, “just as the young peasant girl in the Italian poem we were reading yesterday, proved in the end to be a king’s daughter, and was united to her courtly admirer with great pomp and ceremony and in the presence of all the lords and nobles of his court. The innate nobility of her mind, I suppose, preserving her from the least feeling of awkwardness or embarrassment at the transition.”

“Then in all novels and romances,” continued Trevallion, in the same tone of bitter irony, “from ‘The Mysterious Beggar Girl!’ to ‘The Orphan of the Castle,’ the heroine is always sure to be some one of consequence, whose parents and friends come to claim her in a most sudden and extraordinary manner towards the end of the third volume, and thus effectually prevent all the countless horrors of a *mésalliance*. But this rarely happens in real life.”

"And yet truth is strange," quoted Lady Charlotte, "stranger far than fiction!"

"But even supposing," said her brother, "that it does not, neither do we require it. A woman's heart is in itself so rich a gift as to need no setting to increase its value!"

"For myself," said Trevallion, "I would not marry the most beautiful and peerless creature in existence, upon whose name or family, rested the least doubt or stain, aye though I knew her to be as pure in herself as unsunned snow!"

Lady Anne's proud admiring glance rested for a moment upon him as he stood erect, with a flashing eye, and curved and scornful lip; and then suddenly meeting the keen, cold gaze of Mr. Ormington, she turned away again with a shudder.

"Are you ill, dear mamma?" she whispered, as a faint, gasping sigh from the Countess fell audibly upon her ear.

"No, no, it is past now—it was but a sudden pang!" And the proud mother drew her towards her with more affection than she had displayed for years, and pressed her cold lips upon that regal brow, as she bent anxiously over her. And then once again did the Lady Anne meet that calm, blighting gaze, which seemed to wither all on whom it fell.

"Let us have your opinion on this momentous subject, Mr. Ormington?" said Dunorven, "who must have had more experience on the point than all of us. Is there anything unnatural in a man's loving—aye, and marrying," and his glance rested for a moment upon Trevallion in haughty defiance, for he guessed rightly, that he had penetrated his secret, "a beautiful and virtuous girl, who may chance to be not only portionless, but parentless into the bargain?"

"Nothing unnatural certainly," replied the old man, "it sounds very pleasant

and romantic. But why not appeal to the Countess?"

"No, no," replied Dunorven, a little embarrassed, "being a woman herself, she cannot be considered a fair judge. Then I am to understand that you side with me?"

"Not certainly unless the *dénouement* of your romance is quite sure to turn out as Mr. Trevallion describes, having as great a horror of a *mésalliance* as himself."

Dunorven looked vexed, and his friend triumphant.

"Even where the heroine is all that you describe," continued Mr. Ormington, "there will be a thousand things daily occurring in some shape or other to remind a man of his folly, such as the alienation of friends and kindred, or the sneers of the world."

"If he loves," said Dunorven, "he can defy the world!"

"A most dangerous and impolitic creed, my

young friend," said the old man. "I knew one long ago who did so, but then it was a woman, which made matters worse. And she thought that the affection of him for whom she made this sacrifice was to compensate for all."

"How did it end?" asked Amy, interested in spite of herself.

"As such things ever do—a broken heart and an early grave!"

The girl shuddered.

"He did not love then after all?"

"No, only her broad gold pieces of which not a shilling ever became his. But how know you this?"

"Because if he had she must needs have been happy whatever chanced!"

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Ormington, "the young ever dream thus, growing wiser every year they live."

"More's the pity!" exclaimed Amy.

“ ‘ Where ignorance is bliss—’ you know the rest.”

“ But ignorance is never bliss, but merely a false security which leads us to the brink of destruction, luring us on like a meteor gleam, and then leaving us to retrace our weary steps through many a thorny and dangerous path, as best we may. And yet after all,” continued the old man, “ I have known in my time not a few err in the very opposite extreme, sacrificing without pity or remorse this dream of love, which however wild is sweet withal, to ambition and the love of power and display. And for such nothing remains but humiliation and despair !”

His glance dwelt for a moment upon the pallid face of the Countess of Castle Coombe, as he ceased to speak, but none noticed that lightning gaze of scorn, save her whose very soul it seemed to scorch and wither up.

“ Has our long discussion wearied you ?”

asked Trevallion in a whisper of the Lady Anne.

“ No, I like to hear you speak.”

“ And you agree with me do you not?”

“ Undoubtedly. But you must not quarrel with Dunorven.”

“ I will apologise to him at once if it is your wish.”

“ Not apologise,” said Lady Anne, “ that is not the word. But be friends.”

“ After all,” said Trevallion aloud, “ these arguments are hateful things, and only serve to sow the seeds of feud and dissension where they would never else be found. What say you to a truce, Dunorven? in which each shall be suffered to maintain his own opinion in silence.”

“ With all my heart,” replied the young man, grasping the outstretched hand which was so frankly offered. “ But we may still manifest in deeds if not in words, our unchanged faith!” And his manner while he spoke was

full of a proud determination of purpose which nothing could shake.

"When that time comes it may be necessary to renew the bond," replied Trevallion with unabated good humour, as he turned away to receive the reward of his forbearance. And what higher guerdon could a true knight desire than that gentle smile?

"It seems, Miss Fitzallan, that we are fairly beaten," said Lord Dunorven. While Amy laughed at his saying *we*.

"Never mind," said she, "it will only make us enjoy our peculiar tenets all the more, which is I believe the general result of opposition."

"But is it not a woman's place to yield up her own opinion in meek deference to that of others?" asked Lady Charlotte archly.

"But what am I to do? I cannot yield to both parties."

"And prefer being in the minority?"

"All great and original minds generally do."

"Another dangerous error, Miss Fitzallan," said Trevallion rebukingly. And this time she deserved it, for there are few more false and fatal. The common beaten path is the only one we must venture to tread, even though a nearer and a brighter one may seem to lay amid flowers.

"Why you will make me out presently to be a regular heretic!" exclaimed Amy laughingly.

"Beautiful and fascinating enough to make stakes and faggots seem but light penance for following and adoring!" whispered Dunorven.

"Spoken like my own true knight!" replied the light-hearted girl, "I see that I am not altogether defenceless even yet, but may bid defiance to my enemies! if I have any," she added, a moment afterwards with a touch of grateful recollection, for she somehow fancied that the Countess was looking even more than

usually pale and sorrowful, and had began to pity her so much with the last few days, that she must soon have loved her too, had there been the slightest encouragement given by her haughty patroness for the manifestation of such a feeling. "For after all I do not believe that I have such a thing as a real enemy in the world."

"Not one—are you sure?" said Mr. Ormington quickly.

Amy paused, she was not quite sure, for just at that moment came the remembrance of that stern and unknown relative, on whom she could never reflect without fear and emotion. The one dark cloud upon the sunny horizon of her future destiny.

"Shall I guess of whom you are now thinking?" whispered Dunorven.

"You know."

"Then do not look so pale, for he shall not harm or take thee from us now. But he has for-

feited all claim to your obedience by his long neglect of such a treasure."

Amy looked up with a grateful smile, and saw not how Mr. Ormington's cold, passionless gaze was on them both, or the sneer upon the lip of Trevallion. Happy in her innocent unconsciousness of evil, she might indeed have defied the world.

CHAPTER XIII.

"WELL," said Mr. Ormington looking suddenly up from his book one bright morning, and meeting the fixed and earnest gaze of Amy rivetted steadfastly on his countenance.

"I beg your pardon," said she a little confused, "but I was trying to recollect where I could possibly have seen your face before, it seems so familiar at times."

"In your dreams, perhaps," said he with a cold, mocking smile, while Amy thought within herself that she had never dreamt of any thing half so disagreeable; but not deeming it prudent to say so, quietly resumed her work.

"Then you cannot recal to mind where we have had the pleasure of meeting before, Miss Fitzallan?"

"No, indeed, but perhaps I have a silly habit of fancying such things, for it was but the other day I was so forcibly and familiarly struck with the face of a poor sick woman, to whom Mrs. Jelf sent me with some wine and jellies, that I have scarcely been able to banish it from my recollection ever since."

"One of our ancient philosophers," said Trevallion has attempted to explain this feeling by believing that we must have met the beings who affect us thus, in some previous state of existence."

"A sort of transmigration creed," observed Amy.

"But it is certainly very strange how one does occasionally meet those striking faces which pass us by in crowds, it may be, or in some out of the way spot, looking so familiar that we can scarcely forbear to greet them, and yet in reality we may have never met before, or will, in all probability ever encounter each other again."

"There are some people too," said Amy, "that without recognising, we feel a sort of sympathy with—a wish to be further acquainted—a readiness to exchange smile for smile, even at our first meeting; and it rarely happens when circumstances combine to gratify the wish, that we are disappointed in our expectations."

"For instance," said Lady Charlotte, "at our children's balls, I always used to make up my mind who I should like best to dance with,

and he was sure to come and ask me before the evening was over, and turn out to be the most agreeable of the set. How do you account for all this, Mr. Trevallion?"

"It is unaccountable," replied the young man, looking somewhat amused at her singular illustration of what is after all very true.

"Then there are some people too," continued Amy, "to whom at first sight we take equally as strange and sudden a dislike, and although there may in reality appear nothing to justify the feeling it rarely or never passes entirely away."

"Did you ever feel this yourself?" asked Mr. Ormington quickly.

"No, I do not believe that I ever did."

"Are you sure, Miss Fitzallan?"

"Yes, quite sure," replied Amy decidedly. She was in truth too joyous and warm-hearted to entertain a serious hatred for any one. Lady Charlotte could not help thinking that

she should not have answered quite so promptly had the question been put to her.

"But stay," said Amy with a sudden thoughtfulness, "I am afraid I must confess that there is one person in the world, who although unknown and unseen, I could never bring myself to regard with any feelings save those of fear and dislike."

"But he may not even be in the world," said Lady Charlotte, guessing rightly that she had meant her grandfather. "Indeed from his long and unaccountable silence I should think it most probable that he is dead."

"In that case," exclaimed Amy, "may Heaven forgive him all his harshness and unkindness."

The sound of an approaching vehicle at this moment diverted the attention of the little group, and Lady Charlotte sprang eagerly to the window, followed by Amy, who was anxious to catch a glimpse of their new guest

of whom she had heard so much. While the old man bent down his white face over his book and spoke no more.

"It is Miss St. Aubyn, but how ill she is looking," exclaimed Lady Charlotte, as a fair young girl dressed in the height of fashion, descended from her splendid travelling carriage, and bounded up the marble steps to meet her. "I am so glad to see you once again, Clara."

"You are very kind," said her guest looking timidly around, as though she had expected to see some one else, and acknowledging Trevalion's greeting with a cold and absent air. "And your dear mamma too, for thinking to ask me here."

"She was half afraid you would not like to come and leave all the gaieties of London," said Lady Charlotte.

"Not like to come," replied Miss St. Aubyn quickly, and then she paused, and a faint colour

settled upon her delicate cheek. "But the Earl and Countess are well I hope, and your sister, Lady Anne."

"Yes, and my brother Lord Dunorven, although you do not deign to enquire after him. We did not expect you quite so early or he would not have gone out. Mamma and Anne are up stairs, and I will take you to them, but must first introduce you to my dear friend Amy Fitzallan, and Mr. Ormington, whom you may perhaps have met before abroad."

Miss St. Aubyn bowed slightly to the latter, while she fixed a wistful and earnest gaze upon the beautiful face of the former, turning away at length with a faint sigh to follow Lady Charlotte.

"Well," said Amy frankly, "to return to our old theory, I feel as if I could love Miss St. Aubyn very much, and am vain enough to fancy that I could read in her gentle countenance that the feeling was mutual."

"I doubt it," said Mr. Ormington.

"And why?" asked the girl with a disappointed air.

"You will find that out for yourself one of these days."

"Nay, but tell me now," and Amy drew away the old man's book with a playful air which would have astonished Lady Charlotte and herself too, perhaps some few weeks since, but Dunorven had taught her to believe that his friend was not in reality half as disagreeable as the world made out, and in pursuance of his disinterested scheme for her future aggrandisement, endeavoured to enlist her warmest sympathies in his behalf, although hitherto without much effect, save that she no longer feared him as she had once done. "Its no use looking cross, for you shall not have it back again until you have."

"Then you must keep it, Miss Fitzallan, and perhaps Mr. Trevallion will be kind enough to fetch me something else."

"Nay, give it to him," whispered Trevallion who could not help being struck with the contrast which Amy's laughing face presented to the stern and contracted brow of her companion.

"Yes, just to save you trouble, but there it is; and perhaps, Mr. Ormington, as you would not be bribed you will tell it me for love?"

"Love!" repeated the old man with flashing eyes, and a short, wild laugh that sounded almost like a scream. "Love did you say?"

"Dunorven was right," thought Amy, "he must have been disappointed, and that is what has soured his temper so. How terrible! and yet I do not much wonder at it, for what girl could ever think of having him? But to be sure he might have been very different years ago, when he was young."

"Forgive me if I have offended you," said

she, "but I am often foolish and hasty, and speak without thought."

"Nay, there is nothing to forgive," replied Mr. Ormington coldly, but carefully averting his gaze from those pleading eyes. As good Mrs. Jelf used to say years ago, there were many more beautiful eyes in the world than Amy Fitzallan's but then hers said so frankly, do love and be kind to me, that there was no withstanding the glance.

"Then we are friends again, Mr. Ormington?"

"Where we ever?"

"Oh, yes I hope so, for I always make a point of being friends with every one. Miss St. Aubyn and all, as you shall see, unbeliever that you are!" replied Amy with a mirthful smile.

Perhaps the old man was weary of the argument, for he did not contradict her again, but taking up his book went to read it, as Trevalion said, in peace and quietness.

“ Fairly beaten out of the field,” exclaimed Amy triumphantly, “ and that too without the assistance of my gallant knight. I shall learn quite to do without him in time.”

“ The sooner the better,” thought Trevalion.

Dunorven received his mother’s visiter with his usual good-natured kindness, although her anxious enquiry, and still more anxious looks, made him feel a return of his old dislike creeping over him like a night-mare. Nay, he even fancied that he walked all the lamer from the consciousness that she was watching him. While the Countess penetrating his feelings, trembled for the success of her schemes.

“ I wish, my dear Clara,” said she the first time she found herself alone with her guest, “ that you would be a little more guarded before Dunorven. It is very natural for you to feel as you do, being the innocent cause of that unfortunate accident, which he does not

like to be reminded of so frequently, as you are in the constant habit of doing both by word and look. But you must learn to conceal what can only be painful to both."

"Oh, I wish I had not come," exclaimed Miss St. Aubyn hastily, "of course he must hate the very sight of me—I should have known that; but I thought—I hoped—"

"Shall I tell you what you thought and hoped?" said the Countess, who was strangely altered within the last few weeks, and had grown almost kind and gentle, and was most especially so towards Miss St. Aubyn, who had always been a favorite.

The girl buried her face in her hands and answered not.

"Clara," continued she bending towards her, "you love him—you love Dunorven! nay, do not tremble thus, my poor child, it is a feeling to be proud of, not deny. Aye, and one of these days he shall love you again, and all the

more for your long and unwearying affection. I, his mother, promise you this."

"And you do not scorn—you do not despise me?"

"No, I pity you rather."

"And you will not betray me to him?"

"Not for worlds, your secret is safe with me. Nay, more, I love you all the better for the knowledge of it, and will assist you as far as lies in my power."

"Nay," said the girl raising her pale face for the first time, "Dunorven's affection must be given voluntarily, or long and deeply as I have loved him, woe is me to say it, I would die rather than accept it!"

"And so it shall be, Clara, if you will only act with a little prudence, and be somewhat more gay and animated, and not look so sad and anxious every time he moves, and be always offering to do things for him which he would a thousand times rather perform for himself."

"But how can I help looking sad to see him suffer?"

"I do not believe that he really feels half as much pain from the accident as you imagine," replied the Countess, "except indeed when reminded of it at the precise moment he had forgotten all about it by some over watchfulness. If you could be a little more animated too."

Miss St. Aubyn shook her head despairingly.

"This then is the secret of the ill health and changed looks which have so alarmed your friends, of the cold indifference which I am told drove a whole train of admirers to despair; and so you really preferred my poor lame Dunorven before them all?"

"Nay, I was not so ambitious as ever to aspire to possess his love, but to think of him only was far pleasanter than the admiration of others."

"Silly child," said the Countess kissing her affectionately.

We fear there are many in the world almost as foolish as Clara St. Aubyn.

“And if—we will just imagine such a thing possible,” continued her companion in a faltering voice, “that Dunorven by some strange chance were to become suddenly dispossessed of his rightful heritage, and reduced to beggary and scorn—could you love him still?”

“Better, a thousand times better!” replied Miss St. Aubyn eagerly, “since he would then need it all the more.”

The cold and worldly heart of the Countess was touched, and she leaned her head upon the shoulder of her companion and wept and sobbed like a child.

“Now you are ill and suffering,” said the girl tenderly, “I was sure of it when I saw you first, looking so pale and changed. Can I do nothing in return for all the wild, bright hopes you have been weaving so kindly for me?”

"Nothing, only continue to love my son."

"As if I could chose but obey you in that."

"And in spite of his seeming coldness—aye even though you should suspect his affections bestowed upon another, which I am sure they are not, but only his fancy caught. You know it is not with men as with us who love but once, they may have a dozen *penchants*, and no real attachments after all."

Miss St. Aubyn thought of Amy's beauty and sighed.

"Now go, dear child," said the Countess, "and get rid of that sorrowful face before you join the party below. Say I have the headache, and have lain down, but do not let Dunorven, or any of them come to me, I would be alone."

Miss St. Aubyn promised to obey, and glided away with a lighter heart than she had

felt for years. His mother at least sympathised with, and understood her, and those haunting words, "One of these days he shall love you again, and all the more for your long and unwearying affection," sounded almost like a prophecy.

"Who says that Miss St. Aubyn is not pretty?" whispered Amy to Dunorven, as she entered the room some little time afterwards, looking flushed and agitated, and yet strangely happy.

"Yes, now with that smile, and that rich bloom upon her cheeks; why cannot she be always thus? We were just wishing for you Miss St. Aubyn," continued he, making room for her to join their circle. "We want you to decide whether we shall go to-morrow to a picnic in Fern Wood, or visit the Castle which lies a few miles further on, and is well worthy of our inspection for its antiquity, and the picturesque appearance of the old ruins."

The girl was about to negative both propositions at once, fearing that the journey would be too long and fatiguing for him; but recollecting herself just in time, evaded the question by playfully refusing to answer it at all, while he continued to address her in that stiff and formal strain.

"Well then, where shall we go, Clara?" said Dunorven, and although he had not uttered the name before for years, it came quite naturally.

"I can scarcely be a good judge, knowing so little of the neighbourhood. What does Lady Anne say?"

"Nothing, as usual," replied her brother laughingly, "unless that smile when Trevallion voted for the Castle, was to be taken in token of a similar opinion.

"I think the Castle will be the most interesting," said Lady Anne quietly.

"And you, Miss Fitzallan?"

"Oh, never think of me. I shall be sure and be pleased any how."

"Yes, there is nothing more certain than your unvarying good humour," said Trevallion, and for once he spoke with frank sincerity.

"Thank you. But Lady Charlotte must be included in your pretty compliment, as having an equally contented spirit, or rather an equal indifference on the subject."

"What do you say to playing the 'antiquarian,' Mr. Ormington?" asked Dunorven gaily.

"That I am rather too old and feeble to go so far in order to assume the character; and prefer remaining at home to amuse your lady mother."

The Earl bit his lip until the blood came.

"I suppose we must take Miss Maxwell to play propriety?" said Lady Charlotte.

"Mamma would be displeased else," suggested her sister.

"But how are we to go?"

"My tilbury, and the open barouche will just hold us all," said Trevallion.

"Excellently arranged my dear fellow; but look at yonder black cloud."

"Oh, it is sure not to rain," said Amy.

"It never does on a party of pleasure," observed Mr. Ormington with a sneer, although the mischievous girl chose to understand his words literally.

"No, certainly not, and I am glad to have such good authority for the assertion."

"I wish Cecil was going," thought she, as she looked out into the bright moonlight. "It is strange too his not writing, but perhaps he may be very busy; and yet he might find time if it was only just one line to say that he was well; and I shall not be able to go over to the rectory to-morrow as I promised, I had forgotten that. I do think I should not very much care if it was to rain after all; and yet

this is very selfish when the rest are so anticipating the journey ; and perhaps I may even have a letter before we start." And thus dreaming, Amy closed the casement with a hopeful smile, and sought her peaceful rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE sun arose as bright as could have been desired by the most fastidious pleasure hunter. And the little party met at breakfast in the highest spirits imaginable; even Mrs. Jelf, catching the contagion of their mirth, and moving about with a brisker step, as she gave orders for the distribution of her carefully packed hampers of refreshments. "Young

people never will think of these things," murmured the worthy housekeeper, "but they are nevertheless quite as necessary to a party of pleasure, as light hearts, and fine weather." The good woman was right, although her creed may sound somewhat anti-romantic, and they had all cause to thank her for her foresight before the day was over.

Mr. Trevallion, after a great deal of careful management, led away the Lady Anne in triumph to his tilbury, looking as proud of her as he well might. While Lady Charlotte whispered to Amy, that her sister reminded her of a bride in that white dress and deep veil. And the Countess sighed and half turned away, as Trevallion kissed his hand to her with a face glowing with happiness.

"Take care of her," whispered the mother, she who had feared nothing until of late.

"With my life!" replied the young man fervently, "and thank you for trusting her

with me." He seemed about to add something more, but the horses becoming suddenly restive, he broke off abruptly, and hastened to take a seat beside his fair companion.

"Were you frightened, Anne? He is very quiet in general, only a little impatient to be off."

"Not in the least," replied the girl, shaking back her sunny curls.

"We shall have a delightful drive!"

"I hope so."

"I am sure of it. How can it be otherwise?"

"It is a beautiful morning certainly," said Lady Anne, half averting that fair face wherein lay his sunshine. And she knew it too, for all her apparent unconsciousness.

Miss St. Aubyn looked quite fascinating in the prettiest little Parisian bonnet imaginable, made of pale pink crape, which shed a faint and delicate bloom upon her varying com-

plexion, and completely won Lady Charlotte's heart. And although Amy had, as usual, nothing but a coarse straw, and a simple white ribbon, yet heroines as a matter of course look well in anything, and so Lord Dunorven seemed to think, if one might judge from his countenance.

It was agreed that the four ladies should occupy the inside of the carriage, and Dunorven ride on the box. A proposition which Miss St. Aubyn recollected herself only just in time to prevent disputing, being about to offer to exchange places with him, for fear he should not find a comfortable rest for his foot out-side. The Countess smiled faintly as she marked all this.

"I wish you were going with us, dear mother!" said Dunorven.

"Nay, I fear I should not be equal to the task of keeping in order so many noisy spirits."

"But in that case," said Miss St. Aubyn, "we would all engage to be very quiet."

"No, I should only interfere with your enjoyment."

"I suppose Mr. Ormington is not yet up," said Lady Charlotte.

"Oh! yes," replied Amy, "I saw him just now looking towards the west, and prognosticating rain before the day was over, like an old raven as he is!"

"They say," exclaimed a cold measured voice behind her, "that the appearance of one of these birds generally indicates some coming misfortune!"

The girl shuddered involuntarily.

"You know the old adage, Mr. Ormington," said she recovering herself almost immediately, and meeting his keen gaze with a careless and laughing brow, "about listeners never hearing any good of themselves? Good bye! and a quiet day to you!"

"A merry day to you!" replied the old man with the same immoveable countenance.

"Thank you," said Amy, springing into the carriage with a light step. And they drove rapidly away in order to overtake Trevallion who had had some moments the start of them, and seemed inclined to maintain the advantage thus gained.

Never surely was there a more joyous party, and if Miss Maxwell was a little more silent, she was not a whit less happy than the rest.

"There seems to me only one thing wanting to complete our felicity," said Lady Charlotte.

"And what is that, my fair sister—the roc's egg?"

"No, Saucebox! but a few more beaux. One gentleman is scarcely enough for four ladies, and Anne is much the best off possessing a whole one to herself."

Perhaps Amy half agreed with her in her

inmost heart, that is if she could have chosen her own companion, not else. But Miss St. Aubyn declared herself quite satisfied. And Dunorven, feeling, as he said, the awful responsibility of his situation, exerted himself so much to amuse and entertain them, that he was as good as any two men at least. So that Clara, gazing upon his bright and animated countenance, and listening to his brilliant sallies of wit and humour, forgot to wonder if his foot was at all painful, and enjoyed herself as much as the rest. Dunorven was just the sort of companion for a day's pleasure, and how much of our pleasure depends upon our companions at those times.

"I wonder whether Lady Anne has enjoyed herself as much as we have," said her sister, as they drew near the termination of their journey.

"Quite as much, you may depend upon it, only in her own quiet way; Trevallion will take care of that."

"How much he is improved," said Miss St. Aubyn, "since I met him last in Italy."

"Ah! we are all altered since then, as for you, Clara, I protest I should not have known you. Why you have laughed more within the last five minutes than you did all the time you staid there."

"Have I?" said the girl with a faint blush.

"Yes indeed, and it becomes you a thousand times better than those sentimental airs which most girls think it so interesting to assume. Depend upon it a woman never looks so well as when she smiles."

"Some have imagined her," said Amy, "and Poets especially, most captivating in tears. But that has always seemed to me both unnatural and absurd, since our eyes naturally get red and swollen in those cases."

"They must have meant," suggested Miss St. Aubyn, "those April showers of grief which are over again in a moment. For long

continued suffering is certainly no beautifier of the complexion."

"Give me the sunshine in preference to the shower!" said Dunorven.

"But the sun cannot always shine. The night must come at length!" replied Amy, in a tone that sounded strangely sad, although she meant it not.

"And then we have the moon, only a degree less bright, and ten thousand times more fair!"

"Now we are coming back to sentiment again," said Miss St. Aubyn laughingly.

"Well, I suppose one cannot do entirely without it. But here we are arrived at the Castle already!"

"How soon!" exclaimed Miss St. Aubyn, while even Amy in spite of her occasionally wandering thoughts, had found the ride too short.

"How soon!" repeated Lady Anne, as she

came forward with her companion to welcome them, having previously arrived. "We did not expect you just yet!"

"Or want us either, by the look of it," thought Dunorven.

"Well, sister, have you had a pleasant ride?" asked Lady Charlotte.

"Oh so pleasant!" and the girl's looks said more than her words, which were ever few.

"So have we, and we are going to have dinner now, as good Mrs. Jelf advised before proceeding to inspect the ruins."

Lady Anne put up her pretty lip with a look of young lady-like contempt at the idea of dinner, but nevertheless it was most welcome to all, and enjoyed the more for being partaken of seated on the green, soft grass, and without a quarter part of the necessities appertaining to this meal. For they could neither find half plates, or knives and forks enough, or even glasses. But then who cares for such things

at a pic-nic? nay, we verily believe it is in general a thousand times better to be obliged to shift without them; after all there is nothing like variety. But Mrs. Jelf should have looked after these concerns. So she did, and in her over carefulness stowed them away where no one else but herself would ever have thought of seeking for them.

"Never mind," said Amy, "we shall do very well as it is, and must share our plates and glasses without quarrelling over them. Here, Lady Anne, is one for you and Mr. Trevallion."

The young girl addressed, lifted her large eyes wonderingly to the face of her aristocratic companion, who appeared infinitely amused and delighted with the arrangement; and as it would seem by her manner soon became quite reconciled to its novelty.

Whatever might have been the other accidents of the day nothing could have turned

out better or more exhilarating than the champagne; and Miss Maxwell was obliged to caution Lord Dunorven more than once not to take too much, for he was, if the truth must be spoken, somewhat wearied with his exertions, and sought to recover himself thus.

"It is Miss Fitzallan," said he laughingly.

"Oh, what a story," exclaimed Amy, "I protest I will have nothing more to do with you after that, unless you go down upon your knees ~~this~~ instant, and retract your words."

Dunorven immediately obeyed her, much to the amusement of all but Miss St. Aubyn, who could not help feeling a secret pang of jealousy although she knew it was but in jest.

"Rise, Sir Knight," said Amy, extending her hand with playful condescension, "for ~~this~~ once you are forgiven, but beware how you offend again," and Dunorven first bending down to seal his pardon upon that fair hand, arose as she had desired him.

"We are not alone here to-day," said he, "there is a gentleman yonder, quietly amusing himself by watching our proceedings."

"Oh, where?" exclaimed Amy, "what must he have thought of us?"

"What does it matter. But he has disappeared again now. I dare say we shall meet with him somewhere about the ruins, for I can tell you he is a splendid looking fellow."

"I hope we may in that case," said Lady Charlotte.

The ruins for a wonder were quite as beautiful and picturesque as any of the party had expected to find them; and as they stood before the ancient, and ivy-covered walls, even Trevallion forgot to compare them to the more classic antiquities of his favorite Italy, and looking into Lady Anne's clear, soft eyes, never missed the scarcely bluer skies of the sweet south; and presently either by accident or design, they were suddenly missing from

among the little group, or rather had disappeared from thence, for no one missed them very much.

Miss Maxwell thought perhaps that she had sufficiently discharged her duties as *chaperone* for the present, and being unequal to any further fatigue, chose a quiet nook, and, drawing a book from her pocket began to read. Her studies every now and then pleasantly interrupted by a wild burst of far off laughter, or the hum of merry voices dying away in the distance.

Presently they came, in their wanderings, to a long spiral staircase, much decayed, and leading originally it would seem to the Castle turret, although it was questionable whether one could penetrate as far in its present tottering condition.

"Do not go," whispered Miss St. Aubyn to Amy. "It is not safe for him; and if you stay here he will not attempt it."

The girl started at the earnest manner in which the words were uttered.

"Thank you," said she, "for reminding me, for I am often too thoughtless to remember these things for myself at the right time, but I fancy your refusal would have been sufficient."

"Now," exclaimed Dunorven, "who's for an adventure?"

"Not I," said Miss St. Aubyn, with a look of weariness that was only half feigned.

"Then you must not mind being left behind."

"Go along," said Amy, "we will wait for you," and she flung herself down upon the grass as she spoke.

"Not unless you do," replied Dunorven.

"Then be quiet and remain where you are," and Amy glancing at Miss St. Aubyn with something of triumph at the success of the manœuvre, met a look of wild agony that haunted her for weeks afterwards.

"You are not well?" she whispered.

"Yes, quite well, do not mind me."

"But I cannot help it while you look so pale and sad."

"Do I look sad?"

"Not now," said Amy, as a strange smile wreathed mockingly about the white lips of her agitated companion. "But sit still and rest, you are tired I dare say, or affected by the gloom of these old ruins. You will be better presently."

Miss St. Aubyn thanked her, and said that she dare say she should. But it did not seem very like it.

In spite of all Lord Dunerven had said about Trevallion and Lady Anne, he contrived before the day was over to do the very same thing; and separating himself and Amy from the rest of the party, quite by accident of course, they sat down together by what had once been the brink of an ornamental fountain, although the

waters were long since dried up, and the ancient carve work mouldered away; a feeling of causeless sadness, the natural result of their late noisy mirth, stealing over the minds of each.

"How many," said Dunorven, "may have sat as we are now sitting upon this very spot, as full of hope and joy, who have long since descended into the cold grave. How many more, pleasure hunters like ourselves, will come and go leaving no trace behind."

"Such is life!" said Amy.

"And if so short and fleeting it seems almost a duty that we should make the most we can of it; and not let an hour pass by if possible unenjoyed."

"Or unemployed," suggested the girl gently, "since existence is not merely bestowed upon us to be converted into one long summer holiday."

"And how can we employ it better than by seeking to love and be beloved?"

"Aye, therein lays the charm of life," replied the girl, with clasped hands and dreamy eyes. While her thoughts, like glad messengers went wandering far away, and the passionate gaze of her companion was all unheeded.

"We have known each other a long time now," said he.

"Yes, it seems so, but then I knew you almost as well at first sight as I do at present. There are some people with whom it happens thus."

"Love at first sight," suggested Dunorven half abashed at his own daring.

"I suppose so," replied his companion innocently.

"Do you remember when I saw you first Amy?"

"Yes well," replied the girl, thinking a great deal more of Cecil Grey at that moment, than her present companion.

"And the flowers you threw me?"

"Ah! that was very foolish."

"Very kind rather—I have preserved them ever since!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Amy in surprise, not unmingled with embarrassment, as she recalled to mind all that had passed between herself and Cecil on that night; while her hesitation encouraged her companion to proceed.

"Amy, from that moment my fate was sealed, and I loved you better than ought else in the whole world! Father—mother—rank—pride, what are they to me now, compared to the hope that this affection has not been cherished altogether in vain—That you will not scorn me because I am not as other men?"

"Oh! not scorn!" interrupted the girl quickly.

"God bless you, dearest, for those words!—for that look—and you will be mine—mine in spite of every obstacle which may be urged

against our union!" and once again he sank at her feet, and clasped her cold hands passionately in his.

"Lord Dunorven," began the bewildered Amy, "you astonish—you frighten me!"

"Only tell me that I have not offended you by my presumption."

"No, I should be grateful rather, but—" here she paused suddenly and uttered 'a faint scream of terror. While Dunorven sprang up from his kneeling posture, time enough to catch a hasty glimpse of a rapidly retreating figure.

"Ah! there has been some listener, the same most likely whom I observed once before to-day. But you are pale, Amy—you tremble!"

"Leave me!" exclaimed the girl, suddenly bursting into tears. "For heaven's sake leave me!"

"What here alone?"

"Then let us seek our party."

"Are you afraid to trust yourself with me

for only a few moments longer? I have so much to say—so much to explain!”

“Not for a single instant!” replied the girl vehemently, while her glance still wandered eagerly around, as though in search of some one.

“Then I will not seek to detain you against your will, but chose some more fitting opportunity to urge a suit which I would fain believe, in spite of this strange agitation, is not altogether displeasing to you. Oh! Amy, if you would but answer me this one question! Do you—can you love me?”

“Not as you would have me,” said the girl gently, anxious to soften the pain of disappointment, and blaming herself for her long and wilful blindness as to the real state of his feelings. But that very gentleness deceived him.

“Well then, you shall love me your own way, dear one! Only smile again.”

At this moment the voice of one of the

domestics was heard in search of them; and on emerging from the ruins, they found the rest of the party already seated and ready for starting. Lady Anne having preferred returning home in the barouche, and Trevallion, in consequence, taken quiet possession of his friend's seat upon the box.

"Where have you been? we have been seeking you for the last hour," said Miss Maxwell. "You know we promised the Countess to be sure and get back before dusk."

"And I am to drive Trevallion's tilbury, I suppose?" said Dunorven, adroitly evading the first question, but looking by no means displeased with the arrangement, which had been made quite in opposition to the wishes of Miss St. Aubyn, who, setting aside all selfish considerations, dreaded the fatigue of this new exertion, and half feared that he had taken a little too much champagne at dinner to render him a very steady driver.

"If you do not like to trust yourself with

Dunorven, I dare say we can make room for you my dear!" said the good natured Miss Maxwell, noticing Amy's pale and agitated countenance, and squeezing herself into the smallest possible compass as she spoke.

"Oh! if you would I should be so much obliged to you, or perhaps Lady Charlotte, or Miss St. Aubyn would not mind taking my place in the tilbury?"

"Thank you for both of us," said Lady Charlotte laughingly, "but our necks are quite as valuable as yours."

Clara longed to speak but dared not.

"Oh! I am not afraid of that," replied Amy.

"Then what are you afraid of?" asked Trevallion, with his old sneer.

The girl did not reply, but continued to gaze wistfully at the vacant seat which Miss Maxwell had so kindly proffered.

"Come, come, my Amy, this is very silly!" whispered Dunorven in a soothing tone, as he

drew her reluctantly away, and yet with something of triumph too, at the thought of having her all to himself for the next two hours.

Oh, those long weary hours for our poor heroine ! How endless they seemed, and were only once interrupted by a gentleman passing them on horseback, at a rapid pace, who turned round for an instant, during which his flashing eyes rested upon Amy's sad and colourless face, and was out of sight again almost immediately.

"The very same who was watching us at dinner !" exclaimed Dunorven, "and again by the ruined fountain ; I hope he has been amused."

His companion did not reply ; she seemed stunned and bewildered, and the low, passionate vows, and kind, soothing words of the young Lord, fell alike unheeded on her ear, nay, we are not sure that she ever heard them ; and so ended this party of pleasure for her.

Oh ! when was it ever otherwise ? After all

these pic-nics are very foolish things, whether in real life or in fiction. Nine times out of ten the day turns out showery, not a good thorough soaking rain, when one may stay quietly at home, and grumble to their heart's content, or solace themselves with the idea that their enjoyment is only postponed ; but just a gleam of sunlight tempting us to all manner of absurdities in the shape of tulle bonnets and thin shoes, and then a succession of heavy storms, between the intervals of which that same mocking sunshine smiles gaily out, as though it were amusing itself with the sight of our perplexities ; or, should the weather be propitious, the very persons we most wanted to meet are sure to have a pressing engagement elsewhere, or sprain their ancles, or get a sick, headache, just at the very time, or, what is worse still, take offence where none is meant, and spoil all pleasure both for themselves and us by cold, estranged looks.

The very brightest and happiest may not in-

aptly be compared to the journey of life. All is sunshine and gaiety—we start off in the wildest spirits imaginable—little things move us to peals of joyous laughter—we point out to each other in ecstasy, the birds—the flowers—the green fields—the rose clustering in picturesque loveliness around many an humble dwelling. The idea of love in a cottage seems a very charming and natural one, and we forget that summer does not last all the year, and that the roses will ever fade. A sudden longing takes possession of our minds for a gipsy life in those green, sunny lanes—it must be so free—so joyous!—as if the sun always shone there. Perhaps, a few linger to have their fortunes told, but whether the future be shadowed forth as bright or dark, they only laugh, for the present is all in all—and so passes away that long Summer day.

But gradually they grow weary ; depression succeeds as usual to excitement, and a silence, almost a sadness gathers over the late joyous

party. The birds, and flowers, and rose-covered cottages of the morning seem but a dream. The gipsy warning, unheeded at the time, comes back in the changed state of their feelings like a prophecy—fewer words are uttered, but we cling closer and more fondly to the beloved companion of the day, never heeding how the freshness of their beauty may be dimmed—green, romantic glades and flowery nooks, that would have made us wild with delight only a few hours since, are passed in silence, and we have but one long, yearning wish—to be at home. The day, or the life which we would have it shadow out, may have been marked by but few cares, and yet how we pine oftentimes to lie down and rest !

CHAPTER XV.

THE Countess stood looking out for them as the carriages drove up to the door, in the very spot from which she had watched them depart, and she smiled as Trevallion led Lady Anne towards her.

“ You see I have brought her back safely, and now you will trust me again will you not ? ”

"Yes, certainly Mr. Trevallion. And so you have had a pleasant day, Anne?"

"Oh, yes, so pleasant dear mamma!"

"And you Clara?" for Charlotte's merry face spoke for itself.

Miss St. Aubyn's answer was somewhat less sincere, and yet she tried to smile as she uttered it. And there was no one to notice poor Amy's pale face, and heavy eyes, as she crept away to her own apartment, and wished, oh! how eagerly, that she could remain there for the rest of the evening, except it might be Mr. Ormington, from whose keen gaze she involuntarily shrank; or Lord Dunorven, who was both vexed and grieved by her strange agitation.

"Why what on earth is the matter child?" asked Mrs. Jelf, as she came up stairs for a few moments, to hear from Amy how the party had gone off, and all about it, and found her with her head bowed down upon her hands, indulging in the quiet luxury of a good fit of crying,

for, when the heart is full almost to bursting, there is no greater. "Are you ill?" the good housekeeper forgot that we oftener weep for mental than bodily suffering.

"No, only tired."

"Why you rode all the way there and back. But come, let me take off your bonnet—and for goodness sake," added Mrs. Jelf, half starting as the girl lifted up her head at length, "do bathe your eyes a little before you go down stairs."

"And must I go?"

"To be sure, the Countess would think it so strange else, for you to complain of fatigue when the young ladies are not the least bit tired." And the worthy housekeeper with all her kindness, seemed to be a little astonished too. "Besides a cup of tea will quite revive you."

Amy arose mechanically, and began to smooth out the tangled curls of her bright hair.

"There has been no letter for me I suppose?"

"No indeed, but surely you are not such a silly child as to be worrying yourself about that! and thinking Mr. Cecil must needs be ill because he does not write at the exact time he promised; when he may have a thousand things to occupy his attention. But there, do not begin to cry again, you will have one I dare say to-morrow morning, and I will bring it in myself, and lay it upon your pillow against you awake, if you will only be a little patient and reasonable."

Soothed by her kind voice rather than by the words themselves, Amy checked the rising sob, and having bathed her eyes, and brought forward the dark tresses of her long hair so as to shade that pale, sad face, entered the drawing-room with a step so changed and heavy, that even Dunorven never looked up until she had passed him, and taken her seat in the most out of the way corner of the apartment, al-

though he had been saving a place for her by his side, with all kinds of manœuvres for the last quarter of an hour.

Of all the party Lady Anne was the least fatigued, either because she had been very happy, or very quiet, for she was one of those who never exert themselves more than they can help, and are not in consequence subject to those fits of alternate gaiety or depression, often observable in persons of a more excitable temperament. But nevertheless Trevallion would insist upon it that she must be sadly tired, arranging with his own hands the pillow behind her back, and the ottoman at her feet, and bringing her coffee, &c. And after all it is very delightful to be so watched and waited upon. Once or twice Lady Charlotte wondered to herself what they would possibly have left to tell one another. And we have oftener marvelled at the same thing under similar circumstances. This is one of the mysteries of courtship to the uninitiated.

Even the Countess herself, could scarcely forbear smiling at Dunorven's account of their perplexities, told in his drollest manner with the hope of amusing poor Amy. Or his description of the handsome stranger who had hovered it would seem, in their neighbourhood greater part of the day, evidently attracted by one of the ladies. Or it may be, a rejected admirer of Miss. St. Aubyn's, for he remembered now that she had been strangely and causelessly agitated, and complained of the heat, after the usual fashion of young ladies at such times.

Clara smiled and shook her head, but she would rather he should think thus, than have any suspicion of the real cause of her momentary weakness.

"And is it not just as likely to have been a lover of Miss. Fitzallan's?" asked Mr. Ormington, rivetting his keen gaze upon the pale face and shrinking form of her whom he had named.

"Certainly not, as you would have admitted

had you seen his withering and scornful glance as he dashed by us on our return. No lover would have looked thus."

"Unless he had been jealous."

"Or disappointed at not finding the face he had expected to see, no, Clara shall have all the credit of it.—See how conscious she is looking!"

"How foolish you are Dunorven, as if any one would take so much trouble about me."

"And why not, Clara?"

"Oh, first of all, I am not handsome enough to be the heroine of your romance," and there was a blending of sadness in the assumed playfulness with which she spoke.

"But then you have that 'something than beauty dearer;' and have you not always observed that our best authors generally prefer sketching a mere shadowy outline to be filled up by the reader's imagination, since the most exquisite, and minute description, is quite sure to offend almost as many as it pleases. Do you

not remember, Trevallion, when we first read Walter Scott's 'Ivanhoe,' or rather when you read it aloud to me, for I was ill at the time, how, on coming to that glorious picture of the Jewess Rebecca, you flung down the book declaring that you hated dark women!"

Trevallion laughed, and confessed with a half glance at the transparent brow, and fair, sunny curls of the Lady Anne, that he maintained the same opinion still.

"And yet," said Miss St. Aubyn, "all the best and noblest creations of fiction emanating as they do from a deep study of human nature, must naturally have their prototypes in the world; and one of the greatest pleasures of literature consists in tracing them out, which we could not do if the author's descriptions were not so graphic and vivid that we seem to recognise the individual at a glance, or fancy that we do, which is all the same."

"Yes, I remember," said Lady Charlotte, "that beautiful girl we always used to call

Diana Vernon, until it grew so much into a habit, that Dunorven, one day when we were out riding, and had to go there with a message from mamma, actually bid the groom enquire if Miss Vernon was within, at which the poor man looked quite bewildered, and ventured to suggest in the civilest manner that it was just possible we might have mistaken the house, for Lady Rivers lived there. ‘ Well then, ask for Lady Rivers, it’s all the same,’ said my brother.”

“ And then my good, awkward, and simple-hearted tutor,” continued Dunorven, “ was there ever a more correct resemblance of Domine Sampson? He never opened his lips but I expected to hear him exclaim ‘ prodigious!’ which seemed all that was wanting to complete the character.”

Ah! they should have lived a few years later to enjoy all this to perfection; for the Genius was yet unborn which in our own times stamps so powerful an impress of nature

and reality upon the ideal creations of his teeming fancy, that we recognise them continually with a start of pleasure amid the daily and familiar walks of life. Who is there that does not know among their circle of acquaintances a Mrs. Nickleby, a gossiping, motherly sort of body, who likes nothing better than talking of herself or her children. And recalls past events by remembering how on that very day they had a leg of lamb and peas for dinner, and Mr. So and so dropped in just as the servants were clearing it away, she was sure it was Mr. So and so, because she had on a lavender silk gown at the time, almost new, and he contrived to upset his wine all over the top flounce (they wore flounces then, and very becoming they were, especially for tall people) and you know he was always committing some awkwardness—Ah, that reminds me of another occurrence—” and so the good lady will go on by the hour together, and come round again to

the point at issue, just as we were fancying ourselves in despair a hundred miles off.

Then Heaven knows there are enough Lord Verisophts in the world! But Tom Pinch—the last—the brightest of all the wonderful creations of this modern enchanter! Good, simple-minded Tom Pinch! ‘That dear old Tom!’ as his loving little sister calls him—who knows one?—We ourselves, and so like, so very like that he might have sat for the portrait. Well, after all the world is not so bad if such simple minds are still to be found there. The Mine, dark and dreary as many love to paint it, has its diamonds, and it only requires that we should seek for and be able to appreciate them.

“I fear you are not well, Miss Fitzallan,” whispered Clara kindly to the silent and abstracted Amy, missing that merry voice which was wont to be the busiest among them all.

“No not very; my head aches.”

“Another name for the heart-ache with

young girls," observed Mr. Ormington with a sneer, while Amy coloured violently.

"Oh, no indeed," replied Miss St. Aubyn, "for the first in general soon passes away : the latter, rarely or never ; and although we may feign the one, we invariably conceal the other."

"Or fancy that you do."

It was Clara's turn to start now, was it possible that he could have penetrated the only secret of her young life ? Surely not ; and yet wherefore that mocking voice, and scornful smile ?

"How delightful it must be," continued the old man in the same measured tones, "to be gifted with the faculty of reading each others inmost thoughts. Do you not think so, Miss Fitzallan ?"

"It might make us judge one another more kindly," replied Amy gently.

"No, you are wrong ; it would have just the contrary effect."

“ I cannot think so, and have always fancied Madame Genlis ‘ Palace of Truth ’ a very delightful idea, if we could but realise it.”

“ What says the Countess ? ” asked the old man, fixing his keen gaze upon her varying countenance.

“ God forbid ! ” replied her Ladyship quickly. And who is there that does not echo the reply in their inmost hearts ? Who is there that has not some thought which it may be joy to cherish, and yet shame to own, sinless though it may be ? or worse still, a hidden woe beneath their brightest smiles, which they would die rather than the world should dream of its existence. The heart, and more especially that of woman, dares not dispense with that beautiful reserve in which it loves to shroud itself, even from those nearest, and dearest, so that they can never be quite sure how very dear they are ; a necessary caution lest the idol which we make unto ourselves turn and despise us for our very worship. Oh, silly

Amy! you should have known this long since.

"Let us put it to the vote," said Lady Charlotte gaily, "Who's for the 'Palace of Truth?' Not mamma—or papa—what say you sister?" But the quiet Lady Anne was much too wise, and only shook her head, while Trevallion, devoted lover as he was, had no fancy for venturing within those charmed walls. "Well, then my fearless brother Dunorven?"

"No, no;" replied he, thinking as his mother's eyes met his, that just at the present moment it might prove excessively awkward to all parties.

"Nor you Clara; well, then, there is only Amy, Mr. Ormington, and myself left."

"Do not include me," said the old man bitterly, "for your own sakes, lest that which I might reveal should be too terrible."

"Nay, we would promise to bear it," said Amy, in a kind voice, for the heart oppressed with sorrow is always the most keenly

alive to that of others. And I maintain that if we better understood we could better sympathise with one another!"

"But you could have no sympathy with me?"

"Why not?" and her frank gaze met his cold, searching eyes for once without shrinking.

"Because the young sympathise not with the old."

"Only when they will not let them."

"Some day perhaps," said her companion in a gentler voice, "I may put these principles to the test."

"And so you will not give up your longing after this unattainable palace of truth, Amy?" said Miss St. Aubyn.

"No indeed, for I am convinced we should all be much happier for a brief sojourn there, and learn to love and trust one another a thousand times better. I forget who it is that says, 'how many a knot of mystery and mis-

understanding would be untied by one word , spoken in simple and confiding truth of heart ; but the sentiment is a very natural and beautiful one. And if we were only compelled to give utterance to every doubt as it first obtrudes itself on the mind, and before it has been suffered to grow and rankle into conviction, much, very much of the miseries and estrangements of human life might be avoided."

" You speak feelingly, Miss Fitzallan," observed Mr. Ormington with his habitual sneer.

" And who would not," said Dunoryen, " in such a cause? It would be delightful indeed, if, instead of cold, averted looks, and altered countenances, our friends were to come frankly forward and tell us wherein we have offended — what they may have heard said against us — or seen, or fancied strange in our manner or conduct ; so that we might either own or deny the imputed fault at once, and be forgiven and believed, and ready to love and trust one another again."

"I see you will be wanting to live in our enchanted palace after all," said the merry Lady Charlotte.

"If I was sure that the truth would not offend any whom I loved I possibly might," replied her brother, glancing from Amy to his mother.

"Ah, that is just it," observed Trevallion, "but depend upon it, my dear fellow these things only do in theory For instance you have to visit a dear friend in declining health, whose very life, it may be, hangs upon a thread and though it was only so short a time since you met, the change for the worse in his whole appearance is striking and evident. A few cheerful and soothing words might have done wonders, but the truth—the plain—palpable truth that you believe him to be dying! destroys the last feeble, glimmering, ray of hope, and verifies too often its own sad prediction. Or it may be that some old and highly valued acquaintance chances, as we all know will happen

occasionally, to drop in at the very moment we are least in a humour to receive them. Now the common courtesies of society soon sets all to rights, and the civilities commenced in good breeding often terminate in good will; while this uncompromising spirit of veracity would compel us to offend, and perhaps lose them for ever."

"Not if they were really our friends," suggested Amy gently.

"But my dear Miss Fitzallan, what friendship could ever stand the test of such thoughts as these, forced into language by the enchantments of your fairy palace 'Hang that fellow Brown! just as I had hoped to have a quiet day all to myself; and he has positively dismissed his cab, and means to dine here; and if there is any one person in this world I hate sitting opposite to at dinner it is him, why he might be grinning through a horse collar at a country fair for the face he pulls!' Poor Brown! he

has a peculiar habit of contracting his features into all manner of shapes when he talks, and eats, which we should never have thought of noticing had not his untimely visit put us out of humour. But it is all over with our acquaintance henceforth, for Brown, although a good fellow in the main, has too much vanity to forgive an affront to his personal appearance."

Even Amy could not avoid smiling at Trevallion's droll method of supporting his own opinion, while Lady Anne opened her large, blue eyes in astonishment, at the unusual facetiousness of her generally proud and reserved admirer, and actually indulged in a low, quiet laugh which, gentle as it was, encouraged him to proceed.

"Supposing you had been living in your palace the other morning when the Miss Thompsons called," continued he, turning to Lady Charlotte, "and been obliged to blend your civilities during the visit, with the re-

marks which it afterwards suggested, would not the opening address have been something in this strain ' Good morning Miss Thompson, (my patience what gloves, one can scarcely venture to shake hands for fear of contamination.) I need not ask if you are well with that fine colour, (paint I'd venture to swear !) And Ellen too, (why she gets more coarse and vulgar every time I see her.) How kind of you both to ride over to Castle Coombe, (I wish to goodness you had stopped away.) You must excuse seeing mamma, for she is not very well to-day, and has gone to lie down, and Lady Anne too. is indisposed, that is, they both ran away on hearing your voice in the Hall.' ”

“ Oh, you spiteful thing !” interrupted Lady Charlotte stopping her ears. “ Do make him be quiet Anne.”

“ Admit the hollowness of your theory then.”

“ What do you say Amy, must he have his own way ?”

"For this once," replied the young girl, who was in truth too sad and weary to argue the point, and glad enough to escape back to her own quiet corner and her book, not a leaf of which had yet been turned, for her thoughts were wandering far away.

"How is it that you do not appeal as usual to your sworn knight?" whispered Lady Charlotte mischievously, while Dunorven bent forward to catch the brief reply.

"There is no need, and you told me the other day that it was a woman's place to yield up her own opinions to those of others."

"Aye, but you preferred remaining in the minority."

"I have grown wiser since then", said Amy, almost sadly.

"Since when?" questioned Mr. Ormington with provoking pertinacity.

But the girl bent over her book as though she heard him not.

"And so you had the merry day I pro-

phesied you ?" continued the old man after a pause.

" Oh, no indeed, and you who seem to know everything must have been sure of that."

" You confess my power then at last ?"

Amy did not reply but she shuddered involuntarily, shrinking away from the fierce exultation of those flashing eyes.

" I am sure that your head is very bad my dear Miss Fitzallan, although you will not complain," said Lady Charlotte, kindly noticing her agitation, " and would advise your not remaining for Mr. Ormington to vent his ill humour upon ; but retiring to your own apartment."

" Oh ! I should be so glad."

" Come along then at once, before you are tempted into any more arguments."

" Good night, Mr. Ormington," said Amy gently, as she passed.

" Good night, Miss Fitzallan," replied the

old man, in a light, mocking tone, "and pleasant dreams!"

It was well, after all, that they were not in the palace of truth then, or Lady Charlotte's "Good night Bear!" might have passed her lips as well as her thoughts.

END OF VOL. II.

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THE GRANDFATHER.

A NOVEL.

BY THE LATE MISS ELLEN PICKERING.

AUTHOR OF

"Nan Darrell," "The Fright," "The Grumbler," &c., &c

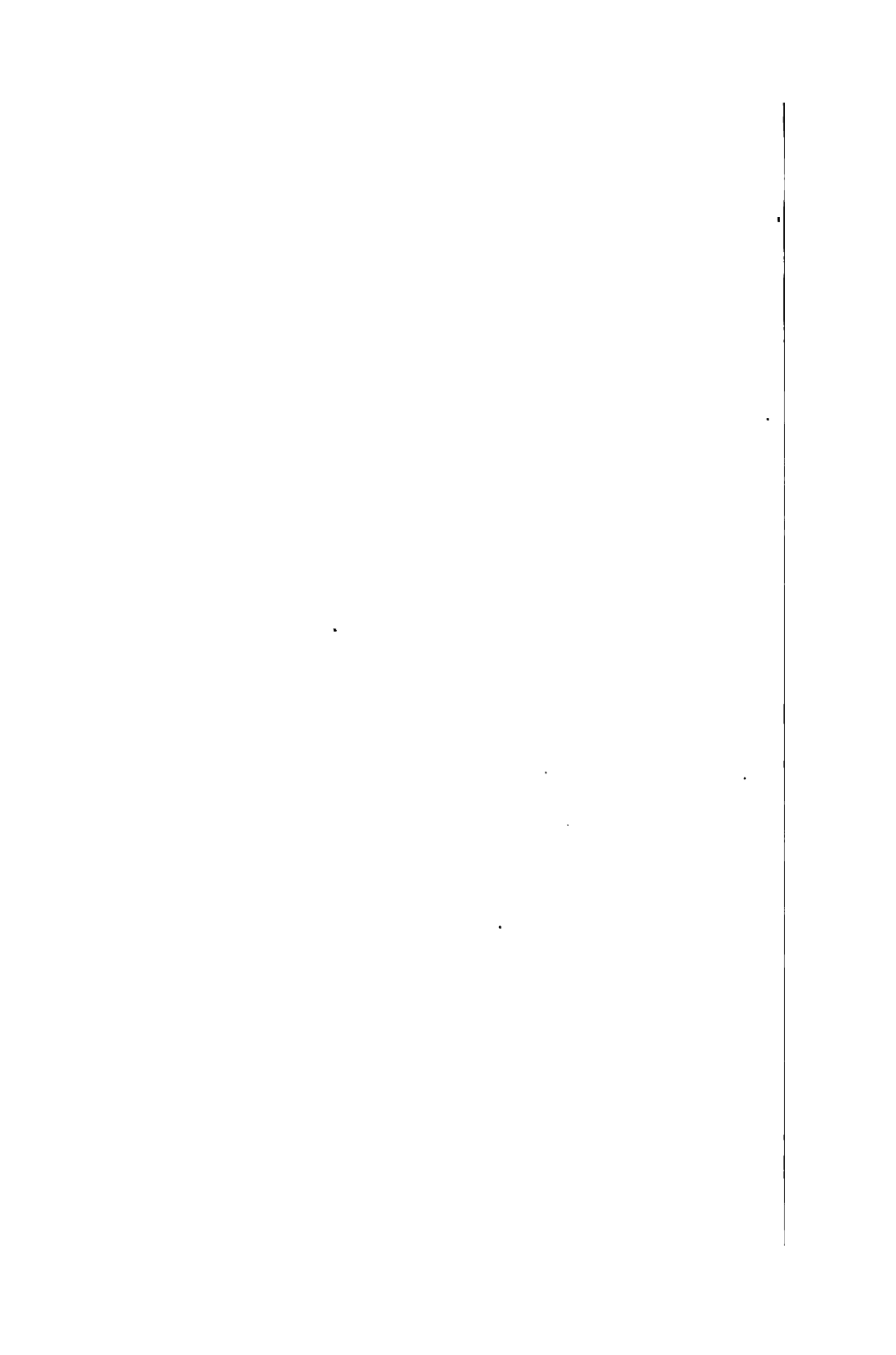
IN THREE VOLUMES.

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1844.



THE GRANDFATHER.

CHAPTER I.

“PLEASANT dreams!” murmured poor Amy, as she laid her aching head upon the pillow, and wept with a sad foreboding of coming evil. “Ah! will they ever come again?” We often think thus, and yet it may be but a cloud passing over the sun. “Surely I could not have been mistaken in that face which I should have known among ten thousand,” continued the girl, “and yet how pale and changed it was—

How sorrowful and angry!—And why did he not speak? He must have been sure when he saw us first, that it was but in jest Dunorven knelt to me; and afterwards how glad I should have been of his presence and support. And for him to have stood boldly forth and proclaimed that engagement which Mr. Alleyne was right in saying, ought never to have been concealed. And yet it must have been fancy, for what could bring him there? and being there would he have departed thus without a word? Poor Dunorven too! I must write to Cecil, for leave to tell him all.” And then again, even in her thoughts came the natural conclusion to all this “What will the Countess say?”

That night, whether it was thinking of her promise to Mrs. Jelf, to go there on the following day, or merely one of those strange visions which come without any previous bidding, we know not, but Amy dreamt of the woman who had been sick of the fever, and whose face

and manners had struck her so vividly at the time; who seemed imploring her forgiveness for some error committed years ago. And then all at once the scene changed, and she sat alone by her mother's corpse! There was the bed with its showy chintz hangings, that she had so often tried to keep herself awake by watching and seeking to make out—The old clock which used to tick so mournfully at night—and the white deal chairs and tables, and antique looking glass, thick with dust, that neither mother or child in their unconsciousness of vanity, thought to wipe away. While just before her, calm and placid as the face of an angel, lay the mild white countenance of the dead, which she had never once feared to gaze upon. And then looking up in her sleep, she saw the blue sky above, and remembering that mother's words, awoke with a smile! And there it was still, and it seemed as though the same Providence which had sheltered her infant years, raising up friends to support her when she most

needed them, was about her still—And should she not trust in it as of old?

Even the quiet Lady Anne, could not avoid observing her pale and altered looks, and asked gently if she were ill.

“No, only a little tired,” replied Amy with a faint smile.

“I did not find the excursion so very fatiguing.”

“No, that was because you were so happy,” replied her companion. While Lady Anne started and coloured slightly.

“And are you not happy too?”

“I suppose so,” said Amy vacantly. “But I wish I could get leave to spend to-day at the rectory, the change would, I think, do me good.”

“I will ask mamma myself,” replied Lady Anne. After all, she was not nearly so cold as she seemed, but had a kind heart hidden beneath all this silence and reserve. We must never judge from appearances.

The desired consent was eagerly given by the Countess, with permission to extend it to as long a period as she pleased, and the longer the better thought the anxious mother. While Dunorven looked vexed, and out of spirits, the more so as he could find no opportunity of saying a single word in private to Amy, and was engaged to drive out with Trevallion a greater part of the morning.

"If you do not very soon return," said Lady Charlotte, "we shall all come in a body, and carry you back again by force!"

"No, come by yourself dear Lady Charlotte! or only with Miss St. Aubyn," said Amy eagerly. "Oh! I wish you would promise me that."

"Why, who is it that you fear?"

"You know Mr. Alleyne sees so little company—and is so very quiet."

"And therefore you ask Lady Charlotte," said Clara gaily, and much puzzled to account for Amy's agitation.

“And you to look after her. If you will come?”

“Yes that I will most certainly,” said Miss St. Aubyn frankly. “Or if you should be ill and will send for me.”

“How much longer are these adieus to last?” grumbled Mr. Ormington, laying down his book in despair. “Why Miss Fitzallan is only going for a day or two at the farthest; she knows that the Countess could not spare her for longer was it ever so, or Lord Dunorven either.” And the old man chuckled triumphantly to himself as he spoke.

“Well, at any rate, there is one who will not miss me very much,” said Amy, trying to rally her spirits. “But never mind I shall be back again soon if it is only to plague you!”

“The sooner the better, Miss Fitzallan, for all parties,” replied Mr. Ormington, while Amy shrank involuntarily from his keen searching glance, and turned away with a slow step.

Mindful of her promise to Mrs. Jelf, who was quite grieved to see her looking so ill, and threatened a thousand restoratives in the shape of jellies, &c. Amy went to call upon the woman who had so interested her, but found that she had quitted the village, and the person with whom she lodged could give no information whatever about her, and did not even know her name. And whether it was the recollection of her last night's dream, or a sudden lightning reminiscence from the past, such as come across us at intervals with a strange vividness, we know not; but all at once it struck her who the woman was, and explained the association of ideas between her and her beloved mother.

"Yes I am sure of it now!" exclaimed she. "It was Betty Harper, the girl who was with poor mamma in her last fatal illness, and went away almost directly afterwards, and I fancy by her manner, that she must also have recognized me."

"I think so too Miss, for after you were

gone she asked a power of questions, all about you and good Mr. Alleyne, and others beside, who have not been known in the village for many a long year—a family by the name of Hopkina.”

“ Oh! I wish I had spoken to her,” said Amy. “ She might have told me something about my grandfather.”

“ Its my opinion,” observed the woman, “ that what you got out of her would have been before breakfast of a morning, as the saying is, for she was mighty close. Even in the fever, when she raved so terribly, there was no getting at anything, or I should like to have understood about those jewels she was so constantly harping upon. My idea is, she had something on her conscience which hindered her getting well very fast.”

“ But she went away suddenly at last, did she not?” asked Amy.

“ Yes Miss, almost immediately after Mrs.

Jelf saw her the night before last, and promised that you should come to-day."

"She went to avoid me then."

"Most likely it was so, but it never struck me before."

"And yet I am sure I never did anything to injure her."

"But she may have done something to injure you, Miss; and so felt ashamed like to face you."

"Nay, we must not say that," replied Amy, "without better grounds for such a suspicion. I only hope she may not be the worse for attempting to travel before she is strong enough. But I suppose I may as well leave the things with you now I have taken the trouble of bringing them so far, they will do for the children."

"God bless your kind heart!" said the woman, as she turned away; for Amy, from having ever a gentle word and a ready smile,

was a great favorite in the neighbourhood. "And evil betide any one who has the heart to harm you! For my mind misgives me that this woman has already done so, and I only wish I had known or suspected it before."

In spite of Amy's eagerness to reach the Rectory, she could not help just calling in upon her old friend Mrs. Marsh, as she must necessarily pass her door.

"Why my goodness, Miss Amy!" exclaimed that worthy woman with more sincerity than prudence, "how ill you are looking! Do, pray come in and sit down."

"Not this morning, thank you, Mrs. Marsh, for I am rather in a hurry."

"Going up to the Rectory I suppose?"

"Yes, you have guessed rightly for once."

"Guessed, I might have been sure of it, and that Mr. Cecil would not spare you for very long."

"Cecil!" repeated Amy, gasping for breath.

"Yes; he was here yesterday, not knowing what to do with himself I suppose, in your absence. He will be surprised to see you looking so pale, for I told him that you were quite well, and all about your coming here with the young Lord, and how merry and pleasant spoken he was, wishing that he was a prince on purpose to have his coat of arms up over my door. And in that case said I, we know very well who would be Queen! and he seemed to understand me at once, and smiled, and said, 'Yes, certainly, there was no doubt about that!'

"Oh! Mrs. Marsh," exclaimed Amy, "how could you do this?"

"Dear heart! Well, I never thought!" said the good woman with a bewildered air, recollecting just then, how she had fancied at the time Cecil's smile to be a strange one, and his manner abrupt and unlike himself. And

coupling all this in her own mind with the girl's pale face, and tearful eyes, it did occur to her that she had been very foolish. "It all comes of the love of talking, as my good man says," continued she, "and I could twist my own neck off, that I could!"

"Nay, it cannot be helped now," said Amy. "And after all, it was nothing more than the truth. It is I who have been foolish and thoughtless, and deserve to suffer for it."

"But you could not help Lord Dunorven's loving you!" observed Mrs. Marsh with a simplicity which at any other time would have provoked a smile.

"No certainly. But did he say nothing more than this?"

"Why just at that moment, you see, Jem came in, and Mr. Cecil asked him if he knew for certain where you were gone to, for I could not tell him. And when he said Fern Castle, ordered a horse at the Castle Coombe Arms, and dashed after you like mad. But I dare

say you saw him, for he must have got there at the rate he was going, almost as soon as yourselves."

"Yes I saw him," said poor Amy! "But I must be going now Mrs. Marsh. Good bye, and thank your son for the sweet flowers he left for me this morning."

"Oh! this love! this love!" said the baker's wife. "Well, who'd have thought it! Mr. Cecil was certainly jealous yesterday. I declare it's every bit as good as a play, only I hope it will end as happily as they generally do." And the good woman contented herself with this vague wish from not exactly knowing which of the rivals she wished success to. "To be sure she had known Cecil Grey the longest; but then the young Lord was so handsome, in spite of his lame foot, and so merry and kind hearted, and liked my cakes so much, calling my gooseberry wine champagne, looking all the while as if nothing in the world could ever put him out of temper, and seeming so fond of her

too. What a fine thing if she should be a Countess after all !” Whether it was the gooseberry wine, or the cakes, or the vision of a coronet in perspective, we know not ; but it is clear that Mrs. Marsh sided most with the young heir. And who would not ? No one but our poor, simple, Amy !

And what were her thoughts and meditations as she walked slowly on ? Something in the same strain, only mingled with a thousand fears and misgivings. Would Cecil be very angry with her ?—would he speak to her when she entered ?—and forgive when he had heard her explanation—when she had confessed all her folly and culpable blindness ? Would he believe her ? Oh ; surely, surely he would ! and love her, perhaps, all the more for this their first quarrel, as she had heard was frequently the case. But those who told her thus could have known nothing about the matter, for we never do love any one the better for quarrelling with them, or half as well, however we may .

endeavour to forget and forgive. And for lovers to quarrel, has always seemed to us very terrible indeed !

Mr. Alleyne met her at the door.

" Somehow I made sure you would come to-day," said he, affectionately kissing her cheek, but making no remark upon its strange paleness, although he was far too keen sighted not to have observed it, " or I should have sent up to the Castle this morning."

" Yes, it seems an age since I have seen you," replied Amy, her glance waudering around as if in search of some one else.

" A whole three days my child ! But come in and rest after your walk."

" Is he there ?" asked the girl, half shrinking back.

" Who ?"

" Cecil."

" No, he returned to London last night."

" What, gone back without a word !" exclaimed poor Amy, wringing her hands.

"He did not join you yesterday, then? My mind misgave me, from his manner, that all was not right. But he left this letter, which I should have forwarded, but for the hope of seeing you."

Amy took it mechanically, holding it wistfully in her hands, as if she feared to break the seal, while the good rector, with intuitive delicacy, turned away to the window and took up a book, until aroused from its perusal by a low, faint cry of grief, which again brought him to the side of the pale and trembling girl.

"It is all over," said she, in answer to his anxious and enquiring look. "Cecil gives me up! But read it yourself."

Mr. Alleyne did so, while a dark frown gathered upon his usually placid brow.

"There has been some misunderstanding," said he at length, "he would not have written thus without a cause."

"He has not," replied the girl meekly, "it is all my own fault!" And then she repeated

to the rector in a faltering voice, everything that had occurred on the previous day, and how she was sure now that Cecil had seen Dunorven twice upon his knees before her, once in jest, and once in earnest.

"I need not ask if you love this young Lord," said Mr. Alleyne.

"Oh! no indeed, dear grandpapa! You must be sure that I do not."

"I am sure of it, and so should Cecil have been, had he loved you as you deserve to be loved."

"Nay, he was not to blame! What could he think of me? And after warning me and all as he did."

"But still this does not account for the alteration in his manner, since I am convinced that it existed previous to his visit to Mrs. Marsh, and his following you to Fern Castle. And from some words which did not strike me so much at the time, that he came fully

prepared to break off the engagement that existed between you."

"There is one thing," said Amy, with a shudder, "that I had forgotten again until this moment. Mr. Ormington mentioned having seen him frequently in London, walking and driving with Miss Drummond, and that there was a report existing that they were about to be shortly united. But I will not believe it!" added the girl with a burst of passionate emotion. "Shame on me for having even mentioned such a thought! As if Cecil could ever change!"

Mr. Alleyne shook his head.

"Would he had thy faith my poor girl!"

"But what must I do?"

"Answer this cold and heartless epistle as it deserves, and cast him off for ever! He is not worthy of thee, and henceforth I have but one child!"

The old man was strangely agitated as he

spoke, but Amy's gentle words fell soothingly upon his ear.

"Nay dear grandpapa! then should I be as hasty and passionate as himself. But may I not tell him the truth, how I have never loved any once else, but only been as usual thoughtless and imprudent?—Would it be very wrong—very un-maidenly?—For after all, as you used to tell us, a truthful, and straight-forward course of proceeding is always the best in the end. And if we had followed your advice from the first, none of this would have happened, for poor Lord Dunorven would never have thought of falling in love, knowing me to be the betrothed bride of another."

"Write as you will," replied Mr. Alleyne, in a more subdued tone. "As your own pure and innocent spirit dictates."

"And you do not think it is wrong?—You do not think Cecil will despise me for my candour?"

"He dare not!" said the old man excitedly.

"And after all it is the act of a coward to give back thus calmly and coldly, a love he took so much pains to win! I doubt if he merits a single thought."

"But then mark his words dear grandpapa! Where he says that he has reason to believe he is only consulting my wishes and happiness in so doing. Who knows what he may have heard? I only regret that we did not meet yesterday, since every thing might have been so easily explained."

"It was his own doing."

"Then you would have me write?" said Amy, anxious to find an excuse for what she half feared might seem to be somewhat forward and un-maidenly on her part.

"Yes certainly, it requires an answer."

"And you are not angry with poor Cecil?"

There was no withstanding that pleading glance.

"If you are not, Amy, I have no right to be."

"No certainly no one has a right to scold him but myself. But you must not say you have but one child again dear grandpapa! it grieves me. Let the worst come to the worst you know, he would still be my brother as he used."

"Go away!" said the old man, pushing her from him with tearful eyes, "Go and write your letter. When the answer comes we will talk further of this matter."

"Then you think he will answer it?—And perhaps, he may begin 'dear Amy!' again as he used—Who knows?" And the girl bounded away to her loveful task, with a smile full of hope. While the good rector, less sanguine, looked after her with a sigh. And yet Amy was right to hope.

CHAPTER II.

It was a bright summer morning, when Amy sat down to write her letter. How easy a task in general when addressing those we love, and we feel sure that only kindly eyes will rest upon these wild outpourings of our inmost souls. But it seemed now, as though she would never get any farther than "dear Cecil."—It was so natural to commence thus. And yet that which lay before her to be answered was cold

and brief. But still she let it stand, she had not the heart to erase it. Who could tell but what it might be the last time she should dare to write thus? And with the thought came a flood of blinding tears that had well nigh blotted it out, although she dashed them away a moment afterwards with a hopeful smile; and began rapidly to write.—

“DEAR CECIL,

“Your letter has both surprised and grieved me. And yet I am more angry with myself than you, since I must have been acting foolishly indeed for you to think thus of me. But I cannot—I will not believe that you were quite in earnest—that you would not recal it now if you could, and will try therefore not to think of it any more. But there is one part where you reminded me of my childish wish to be heiress of Castle Coombe, and forget it was only on condition that *you* were Earl. It has no existence without this clause. You tell me

likewise, that it is for my happiness you break off our long engagement thus suddenly, if it can any way promote yours, be it so, but not else ! for the one is so bound up in the other that they can never be separated."

Amy then went on to make a thousand excuses for her long blindness to Dunorven's admiration. To regret, half in playfulness, half earnestly, the fatal beauty of which good Mrs. Jelf had warned her years ago, and wish in very truth, she had indeed possessed no more than was suited to his individual taste, so that none else would have thought of loving her but him. Explaining the events of the previous day, and how wretched she had been ever since, and should be until she heard from him. Asking leave for Mr. Alleyne to make known their engagement, so that there might be no more of this. And begging that he would forgive her the uneasiness she had caused him, and write again very, very soon. And then, although Amy did not believe a word about it,

she could not help adverting to the rumour which had reached her concerning himself and Miss Drummond; and how, remembering all that he had told her about that young lady, she had only laughed at it.

"But if—if," wrote the girl, "it should be true, and you have found cause to change your opinion since then, do not fear to tell me of it, Cecil. Mr. Alleyne may be a little angry just at first, but it will soon pass away, and I—I shall think only of you and her—and be very happy I dare say after a time, knowing you to be so. But in that case burn this foolish letter, and let us be once again brother and sister as of old."

When she had finished Amy gave it to Mr. Alleyne to read, but he could not manage to get half through it for tears, and returning hastily bid her send it away at once, lest it should be too late, although there was still plenty of time. And the girl wished afterwards she had not been in quite such a hurry,

remembering, as we always do at such times, a dozen things which she had meant to say, and regretting the wording of as many, lest he might think her too cold, or learn to despise her for her frankness.

"When will he get it?" asked she at length of her equally silent companion, for both had been lost in thought.

"Not until to-morrow morning."

"Poor Cecil! what a time to wait. I wonder whether he is as anxious and unhappy as we are. I think he must be, grandpapa."

"He deserves it," said the old man.

"Ah! if we all got our deserts! Then it will be nearly two whole days before I shall receive any answer?" added Amy, still reverting to the letter.

"Supposing that he writes directly he gets it."

"Oh! he is sure to do that!"

Mr. Alleyne did not feel quite so confident upon the subject, although he forbore to say

so; and Amy with the view of diverting his thoughts, began to tell him all about Betty Harper, and express her regret that she had not recognized her at the right time.

"I do not see what good it would have done, as she is evidently ignorant of your grandfather's abode. And most likely knows little more than yourself."

"But what could have made her so strange that day when I called?"

"Some lingering remains of the fever most probably, from which she was only just recovering. But you, or Mrs. Jelf should have told me of this, since it is both my duty and pleasure to visit the sick, and the stranger."

"I never thought about it afterwards."

"Meeting Lord Dunorven, and going to good Mrs. Marsh's, put it quite out of your head I suppose."

"Oh! that unfortunate visit!" said poor Amy.

"Well it cannot be helped now. But you

have not yet told me how you like the Countess's new guest, Miss St. Aubyn."

"Very much! She has the sweetest and gentlest countenance I ever saw. No one can help loving her."

"And the Countess herself, how sadly she is changed within the last few months! Can there be any truth in the vague rumours which are whispered abroad concerning the Earl's love of play?"

"Oh! I hope not!" said Amy, "but somehow I cannot help ascribing this alteration, in a great measure, to the presence of Mr. Ormington. Who reminds me of those evil spirits that I used to read about when a child."

"I do not very well see how he can have anything to do with it, unless the Earl expects that he will lend him money, for they say the old man is very rich. Or that he will make Lord Dunorven, to whom he seems so partial, his heir."



"I wish he would!" said the girl eagerly.

"Nay Amy, I shall think presently that you do love this young Lord, after all."

"And so I do," was the frank reply, "only not exactly as he wishes, or Cecil suspects; but if you only knew half how kind and good he is, and how merry-hearted, and patient, and what a favourite he is with both young and old. As for the Countess, I believe her whole soul is wrapt up in this dear son!"

"I can easily take your word for all this," said Mr. Alleyne, "and only hope that he will have prudence enough to keep his own secret. Why it would drive that proud mother well nigh mad, to think he had ever dreamed of bestowing his affections upon an unknown and portionless orphan!"

"Do you think so?" said Amy, a deep flush mounting to her very brow.

"I am sure of it! And can scarcely blame her for a feeling which seems only natural to one of high and ancient lineage like herself."

"And yet you deem me good enough for Cecil."

"But Cecil will never be an Earl."

"Nevertheless I am far prouder of his love than of Lord Dunorven's."

"That is because you are a simple, unworldly girl, my Amy,! And such may you ever remain. But let us walk out now and enjoy the beauty of this calm summer night!"

The following evening, Lady Charlotte, accompanied by Miss St. Aubin, walked over to the Rectory to see how Amy was, bringing with them a note written by the Countess herself, begging that she would not think of returning so long as she found the quiet beneficial to her health, which she had no doubt required only this slight change.

"How kind of your mamma," said the grateful girl, while Mr. Alleyne half smiled as he perused the cautiously worded epistle which she put into his hands, fancying from its tenor

that her ladyship already suspected something of what had taken place.

"Why you are looking quite yourself again," said Lady Charlotte, "but I can only tell you, that if you venture to take mamma at her word, you must not hope to exclude an occasional visit from the rest of us, just to see how you are getting on, and that you are not buried alive in this dull place. Dunorven for one could hardly be persuaded to let us come without him to-day."

"You must tell him," said Amy, with affected playfulness, "that I have made a vow against all male visitors."

"And how long do you mean to keep it?"

"Oh! for some little time at least, by way of a change."

"I should be sorry to try you," said Miss St Aubyn, shaking her head with a sad incredulity.

"So should I, because it might seem unkind

to Lord Dunorven, after his taking the trouble to come so far."

"And do you mean to say that you really would not admit him?"

"*Oui Vraiment.*"

"Have you quarrelled then?" asked Lady Charlotte, as a new light broke over her mind.

"I hope not," replied Amy with an eagerness that left no doubt of her sincerity. "But how is Lady Anne, and Mr. Trevallion, for somehow one name always follows the other quite naturally."

"As though they would some day be merged into one, I suppose. They are quite well I believe. And as for papa, I have not seen him in better spirits since our return to England; he is gone out to ride with Dunorven, and quite laughed at him, for warning him against Emperor's occasional viciousness, as if, he said, he had forgotten how to sit on horseback."

"But could he not ride one of the other horses?"

"My brother wanted him to do so, for even Trevallion, who is about the best horseman I ever saw, sometimes finds a difficulty in managing him. But nothing else would do."

"I wish Lord Dunorven had not gone," said Miss St. Aubyn, "for I am sure it must hurt his foot very much."

"It is as well you did not say so Clara, for he would sooner bear the pain a great deal than be reminded of his misfortune at any time."

"Yes I know, and am very careful now ; and yet I cannot help wishing at times that I had never been born, for then Dunorven would have had no drawback to his pleasure."

"I doubt whether you are really consulting his happiness in this wild wish," said Lady Charlotte, with a gravity and earnestness very unusual, while Amy passed her arm around the waist of the young girl in silent and affec-

tionate sympathy. "The balm and healing may lie in the same power which so innocently dealt the wound."

"No, no," said Miss St. Aubyn, a little wildly, "not in mine!"

"Yes, yes I say!" replied her friend more gaily, "and I will not be contradicted! Amy I see agrees with me by that smile."

"I think not," said Clara, looking up eagerly into her half averted face.

"Then you think wrong, Miss St. Aubyn," replied the girl turning suddenly round with a frank and joyous glance. "I both think and hope that it may yet be as dear Charlotte says!"

"Did I not tell you so!" exclaimed her companion triumphantly. "But whose beautiful drawings are these?"

"They are done by Mr. Alleyne's grandson."

"Ah! yes, I recollect," said Lady Charlotte archly. "Your brother, as you call him. And

is this his writing at the back? Nay, I will read it! May I not Mr. Alleyne?" added she appealing to the rector, who was once more absorbed in his books.

"Yes, certainly," replied the old man, glancing up from his studies with a bewildered air.

"A sonnet I declare, written in Italian, and addressed to you, Amy. How I wish Anne were here to translate it for us. You must know Clara," continued she, holding it above her head, in order to maintain possession of her prize, "that the drawing represents a scene in Italy, which I can remember very well; and most eloquently does the author descant, as far as I can make out, upon its picturesque beauties—its sparkling torrents, and blue and sunny skies—concluding with a touching gentleness.—Forgive me, Amy if I spoil it"—

"I knew not then, MY sun had not yet risen,
When humbler scenes would seem ten times more fair,
And bright—and glad—because, that THOU wert there!"

Miss St. Aubyn was delighted with the verses, which she read over and over a dozen different times, and translated in a dozen different ways ; she could not have been more so, had they been addressed to herself, perhaps not half as much. No brother would have written thus, thought Clara, and she was right.

“ Tell me about this young poet,” said she, as they walked together through the quiet Rectory garden. Lady Charlotte having preferred remaining, as she said, to tease good Mr. Alayne ; and Miss St. Aubyn looked so kindly at her while she spoke, that Amy could almost have found it in her heart to comply with the request and tell her everything, but thought it better to wait and obtain Cecil’s permission first, to make their engagement public, since he must have seen by this time all the dangers of a further concealment.

“ Not now,” said she, “ but some day perhaps.”

“ Only one word Miss Fitzallan,” and the

voice of her companion faltered strangely,
“do you love him?”

For a moment Amy hesitated in her reply, but it was only a moment, for she had a vague suspicion of the happiness her answer would bestow, and was, besides, too proud of Cecil to mind letting all the world know of her attachment.

“I do!” replied she frankly.

“As a brother only?”

“No, as a husband one day, if Heaven wills it so.”

“Forgive, oh! forgive my curiosity!” replied Miss St. Aubyn, with a bright smile.
“But I had thought—I had feared—but no matter, it is past now; and I can only pray that you may be very happy!”

“Thank you; but I feel sure that it will be so, and so would you, if you knew Cecil Grey.”

“I hope I shall one of these days.”

“Yes no doubt, unless,” and a sudden shade

passed over the joyous sunshine of poor Amy's face at the recollection of his last visit, and that cold, brief letter, the contents of which yet remained uncontradicted.

"Unless what, my dear friend?"

"Nothing! It is silly and wrong to doubt those we love!"

"Aye, if we can once be sure that it is returned."

"If not, we may hope," replied Amy cheerfully. And Miss St. Aubyn did hope from that hour.

CHAPTER III.

ONCE again Amy arose with the dawn, looking forward as impatiently for Cecil's letter, as she had once done for him, that letter on which depended all her future happiness. And once again did Mr. Alleyne gently chide, and the provoking old church clock, that would not be put out of its way, or move a single instant faster or slower for any one, seem to mock her eagerness.

"Suppose after all he should not write to-day?" said the rector, not ill naturedly, but willing to prepare her for a disappointment which he thought by no means unlikely to take place.

"Oh! there is no fear of that, unless indeed he means to surprise us by coming himself instead, although I think it is almost too late for that to-day."

Oh sanguine and ever hopeful spirit of youth!

"Do you think then that Cecil has nothing better to do than travel backwards and forwards between London and Castle Coombe? Why it was but the day before yesterday he was here, complaining of being so busy that he could scarcely find an hour to himself."

"Ah! that is not counted," said Amy gaily, "since I did not see him. And I do not think he will be too busy to write, if it is only a line."

"We shall see," said the old man. But Amy heard him not, she had bounded down the

garden and returned triumphantly, with the long expected letter in her hand.

"Now was I right dear grandpapa, in answering for him?"

But why did the girl still hesitate, as she held it a moment without having the courage to break it open, the colour coming and going in fitful flashes upon her cheek, and her eyes sparkling joyfully through tears. Ah! how much may a letter contain which we long, yet fear to read! But the motto upon the seal seemed to chide her doubts, it was that of their childhood, "Hope on, Hope ever!" It had been the motto of her young life. Amy glanced eagerly at the first word of her crossed, and re-crossed epistle, and then sinking upon a chair burst into a flood of tears, and wept long and soothingly.

"My poor child!" said the rector, fearing the worst from her agitation. "What has moved you thus? why you cannot have read a word yet."

"Yes two words, grandpapa—See! he has began "dear Amy," just as he used to do!"

The old man turned to his books again, leaving her to the quiet perusal of her treasure, but his own eyes were not quite free from moisture.

Still maintaining our original opinion, that such are in general only interesting to one person alone, we do not mean to inflict the whole of Cecil's long letter upon our readers—To repeat his supplications for forgiveness—his thanks for her loveful trust—and sweet and gentle candour.—His indignant refutation of the charge of having aspired to the fair hand of Miss Drummond, who was on the contrary about to be shortly united to another, a sure proof that all were not of his opinion with regard to nonentities. It would not do for men to think quite alike in these matters. How eloquently did he describe his anguish and despair, when even in mockery Dunorven had knelt down to worship at a shrine he had imagined

sacred to his own devotion. And yet he might have remembered it was but natural for others to love and admire her too. His pride and joy to know that however little deserved, her heart was still all his own, and had ever been so.— And the hope that ere long he should be enabled to come and claim her before all the world!

“Enclosed,” so ran the concluding paragraph, “enclosed is the only excuse I have to offer for my madness. And yet I should have scorned to believe its statements—I should have trusted, as you trusted me, my Amy! And thus a world of pain might have been saved to both of us.—But it is the last—the very last time I will ever doubt your love!”

How often had he said this before, both on paper and with his lips, and yet Amy believed him, still just as she had always done, and would have gone on forgiving and believing as long as he could have found the heart to torture thus, that gentle and devoted spirit.

“But, where is this excuse of which he

spoke?" said Mr. Alleyne, looking every bit as happy as the girl herself, "for truly, as he says, he needs some for thus causelessly playing the jealous lover and the fool beside."

"Oh! but he had some cause in Dunorven's conduct, and my own thoughtless encouragement of his suit."

"Well, well, take his part since it seems to afford you so much pleasure to do so on all occasions, although I think him quite capable from this eloquent epistle of pleading his own cause. But let me look at the paper he sent you." And the old man took it from her hand and read aloud the following words.

"If the affection of Cecil Grey for his old playfellow and companion, Amy Fitzallan, be half as disinterested as the writer of this gives him credit for; he will not hesitate for an instant in freeing her from an engagement, entered into years ago, and before she could be aware of its nature and obligations, since that alone now stands in her way to honor and

happiness. Of course, however heavily the chain may press, she cannot seek to emancipate herself from a bondage, which once removed, would leave her free to enter into other and more congenial ties. And whether her future destiny be bright or otherwise, rests alone with him, who has professed his love to be an unselfish one."

"The last clause is true enough," said Amy, as he finished, "but is there no name appended to this singular epistle? And who could possibly have sent it to him? And so he came down I suppose to find out the truth, and meeting first with that gossiping Mrs. Marsh, while his mind was still prejudiced; and witnessing what he did at Fern Castle, one cannot wonder much at his after conduct. But good heavens!" added the girl, as her glance rested upon the paper which the good rector still retained. "I should know this hand writing amidst a thousand! Yes I am sure of it—it is my grandfather's!"

"Are you quite certain of this, Amy? And yet to confess the truth the characters seem familiar, and I was wondering where I could have seen them before."

"What a mystery hangs over me," exclaimed the girl, with a sudden and undefined dread of she knew not what. "Will it ever be solved?"

"In Heaven's own good time, my child! doubtless."

"But it is fearful to think of the ceaseless watch which this mysterious being must be keeping over every thought and action of our lives! What schemes he may be planning even now to separate us for ever!"

"No, no, Amy, your own sweet trust has rendered them powerless in future."

"But he will not seek to harm Cecil—will he do you think? Or carry me away, perhaps, and force me into marrying as he wishes?" said the girl, whose imagination, it may be, was a little embued with the recollection of similar

occurrences in the various novels and romances which she had read at different periods.

"The time is past for those sort of things," said the good rector, half smiling at her fears. "Although there is no saying how this will end. It is evident that your grandfather has higher views for you than a union with Cecil would promote."

"Is that possible? One would have thought he would have been as proud and glad as I am, to think of his long neglected child winning a heart which queens might envy her the possession of!"

"My poor, simple Amy!" said Mr. Alleyne. "Will you never grow wiser?"

"I hope not if such wisdom would make me think less highly of Cecil."

"After all," said the rector musingly, "I should not much wonder if some of your early romantic dreams were to be realized, and you turn out in the end to be a great heiress!"

"I hope not!" exclaimed Amy quickly. "I

have no ambition now. You and Cecil will love me just as well as I am, a poor, unknown, and friendless orphan, dependent on you for my all of happiness, and safe and blest in your affection. Wealth and rank would only serve to separate us from each other."

How very soon we all come to think with Amy Fitzallan.

At this moment, Martha, the under housemaid at Castle Coombe, was seen approaching the rector with hasty steps, her face pale, and her eyes swollen from excessive weeping.

Why what can have happened!" exclaimed Amy, springing forward to meet her, and leading her, kindly to a seat. "Nothing—nothing to Lord Dunorven I hope?"

"No it was he who proposed my coming, lest you should be frightened Miss, hearing it from any one else. Just to fancy his thinking of you at such a moment, and well nigh distracted as he is."

"Lord Dunorven was ever most kind and

thoughtful. But do tell us Martha all about it. Anything is better than this suspense."

"Oh! the poor Earl!" exclaimed the girl, wringing her hands and beginning to weep afresh. "To be sure he was not as affable, and sweet spoken as the young lord his son—but had become of late, so all the servants say at least, a changed and altered man. But it was hard to be taken thus suddenly, and without a moment in which to say his prayers, or unburthen his sinful conscience. God forgive me if I am wrong in thinking that there was a sin upon it of some sort!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Mr. Alleyne, while Amy grew pale with horror. "The Earl of Castle Coombe dead! Why it was but yesterday that we heard of his being alive and well."

"Yes, so he was, sir, and went out riding with Lord Dunorven and Mr. Trevallion; both of whom would fain have persuaded him not to ride that vicious brute Emperor! You

remember Emperor, Miss Amy? Well, no other horse would do for him: and Tom the groom says, that he knew from the first bad would come of it, for his master did not seem to understand at all how to manage him, from not having rode for so long, and being beside but in nervous and indifferent health. Even after they had started Mr. Trevallion offered to change with him, but the old Earl was obstinate, or *it was to be!*" added Martha solemnly. " And just as they had got within a few miles of home, on their return, the horse, it seems, shyed at some object in the road, and giving a sudden plunge, the poor gentleman was flung violently forward, and pitched upon his head on the hard stones. The Doctor thinks that he did not suffer much, but was stunned at once by the blow: and it is certain that he never spoke again so as to be understood, only the name of Mr. Ormington, which was repeated once or twice; but no mention made of my lady or the children. Tom says that it

was terrible to see him lying upon the ground struggling and gasping for utterance, with the blood gushing from his pale lips; and the poor young Lord bending over him trying to catch a word, but none came save that one name. And at last he gradually became quite still, and they knew it was all over!"

"May God have mercy upon him!" said the good Rector. "But how does the Countess bear this fearful shock in her present state of health?"

"Badly enough, sir; they say she is like one distracted. But Lord Dunorven thinks, perhaps, that she might be persuaded to see you."

"I will go to her directly."

"And Miss Amy, sir; the young ladies will be so glad to have her just now."

"Yes, we will go together; get your bonnet on, dear child! The walk will do you good. And remember that you must strive to play the comforter in this terrible affliction, and

not give way to your own individual feelings."

The good Rector was ready in a few moments, and sat down to wait for Amy; until startled by a sound as of some one sobbing violently: and pushing open the door of an adjoining apartment, was surprised to see her upon her knees before a chair, with her face buried in her hands, weeping bitterly. She started up, however, on his entrance, and dashing away the blinding tears, endeavoured to meet him with a smile.

"Nay, now I shall chide in good earnest," said Mr. Alleyne.

"Forgive me, dear grandpapa! indeed I could not help it. For all of a sudden it came into my head how Cecil had dashed by us on horseback as we returned from Fern Castle; and I thought if it had been him who had been thrown, and on that very night too, and died thus without a pardoning word—died with the conviction of my faithlessness, how terrible it

would have been! And then I knelt down and thanked God for all His mercies, praying that He would continue to preserve him to my love!"

"It is in moments of affliction such as this, or in great peril, that we mostly come to appreciate, and be grateful for the continuance of the numerous blessings we enjoy," replied the rector with tearful eyes. "And the death of those around us, makes us cling all the more lovingly to the few faithful hearts, which we know not how much longer may be spared to us. But come—arouse thee my Amy! and let us not shew our gratitude by words only, when our presence may be of comfort or service to others."

"Oh! thank you for not scolding me.—I shall be ready in a moment!" And the girl flew back to secure her letter, which she would not have left behind for all the world! Why she had only read it once as yet. And who ever received a love letter that did not peruse it a dozen times at least? Aye until they had

learnt it by heart. And having folded it up and concealed it in her bosom, prepared to accompany her old friend on his errand of consolation. And, in spite of all her sympathy for the bereaved family, with what a changed spirit did she return to that abode, which she had quitted but a day or two before with a sad and heavy heart. How the cloud which darkened around her future, had passed away since then. 'And thus,' in the language of that dear old Author, Flavel! 'do we often kiss those troubles at parting, which we met with trembling.'

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Trevallion's travelling carriage was standing at the door when Amy and her guardian arrived, while the usually calm and passionless Lady Anne, leant against the window, weeping bitterly. And yet the recent affliction which had fallen upon them might well account for those wild tears; although Trevallion, who still lingered by her side, doubtless ascribed them to a different cause. Alas for man's vanity!

"Anne," said he at length, "I cannot bear to see you weep thus."

"Ah! have I not cause?"

"Yes it was very terrible," replied the lover, humouring what he thought perhaps in his heart, was only a maiden subterfuge to hide the pain which their separation afforded her in common with himself. "But you must be calm for the sake of those dear friends still remaining to you."

"Poor mamma! for instance, must not see these tears," said the girl, making an effort at composure.

"And do you think Anne, that there is no one out of your own family whom they afflict, and unman, and tempt into forgetting those absolute duties which require his presence elsewhere, in order that he may remain and strive to soothe them?"

"They shall do so no more," said Lady Anne, dashing them proudly away. "Good bye Mr. Trevallion!"

"But we part friends, do we not?" asked her companion, still retaining the hand which she had given him.

"Oh! I hope so!" and tears again swept away all traces of her momentary self-possession.

"I shall be thinking of you continually," said Trevallion, "and wondering whether you are ill, and so perplexing myself with a thousand doubts. May I not write, and hope for a line to clear them all away?"

"Yes, Dunorven will I am sure be always glad to hear from you."

"And his sister?"

"Of course, through him."

Oh! cold—proud—provoking Lady Anne! And yet it was for this very reason Mr. Trevallion loved you so much. Women should not be too easily won, and he did right in thinking that one so peerless and beautiful, and withal so fond, for he had found that out long since,

in spite of all thy silence and reserve, was well worth the wooing.

"And will you not write me a line—Not even a postscript?" persisted Trevallion.

"If—if Dunorven should be busy, or otherwise engaged, perhaps."

Heaven forgive the unreasonableness of all lovers! Trevallion felt half tempted to wish that his friend might not be able to find a moment's time for the next six months! And somehow by a strange coincidence, it did happen a great deal more frequently than not, that the young Lord was obliged to turn over the answering of these epistles to his sister. And it was odd too, that the usually indolent Lady Anne, never complained of the extra trouble, but seemed to fulfil her task with ease and willingness. Although she would sometimes call Dunorven, half playfully, a sad idle correspondent, who deserved a good scolding, which she should tell Trevallion to give him; as he never did however, perhaps she forgot it.

The right term to have used would have been a dear, good natured brother ! who always made a point of doing as he would be done by.

The entrance of Mr. Ormington, the only one of the family who would have entered at such a moment, put an end to any more adieus. And Trevallion passed on, with a proud and stately step, to his carriage, for he was not one to suffer the common eyes of the world to fathom his heart's secret if he could help it ; while Lady Anne, under the influence of a similar feeling, moved from the window to the middle of the room, where she could see without being seen ; for she could not help with all her coldness, feeling anxious to behold the last of him. And how natural this is, especially when some recent bereavement has made us feel more than ever conscious of the frail and uncertain tenure by which we hold our best and dearest blessings ! And infected us with a dim foreboding fear, that we may be even now gazing our last upon a beloved face.

Trevallion saw her however ; how quick his eyes must have been ! His parting bow and smile made this evident enough, and the proud girl coloured to the very temples ; and then looking up, and catching the cold, withering sneer upon the lip of Mr. Ormington, who was attentively regarding her, shuddered she knew not why.

Lady Charlotte affectionately embraced Amy, upon her entrance, and it was sad to see the change which the events of the last day or two had wrought in her usually bright and happy countenance.

"How kind of you to come," said she, "Anne and I have been wishing for you so much."

Lady Anne held out her hand eagerly to welcome her, but her face was pale and tearful.

"You are better Miss Fitzallan, are you not ?" asked Mr. Ormington, whose keen gaze was intently rivetted upon her countenance.

"Yes thank you, quite well!"

"And happy?"

"But for this," replied Amy ingenuously, but in a low voice.

"I am glad of that," said the old man, in cold, measured tones that contradicted his words. "For I feared you were not looking so when you left us."

The young girl deemed it somewhat strange that he should take the trouble of interesting himself in her looks, but kind nevertheless; she always thought every one kind.

"And what mighty and potent spell has wrought so sudden a change?" continued Mr. Ormington.

"That of faith and truth I believe," replied Amy, half unconscious that she had spoken aloud.

"Ah! is it so!" And a dark frown gathered upon the stern brow of her companion.

"It is a fearful thing, this sudden death!" said Amy, drawing nearer to the strange old

man, for they were alone, Lady Charlotte having gone to prepare her mother for the reception of the rector, and Anne to weep and meditate in quiet. A strange happiness at times.

"Yes indeed, and he was nearly twenty years younger than I am!"

"The young frequently die before the aged," said Amy soothingly.

"Aye, the child before the parent. It happened thus with me."

"I did not know you were ever married. You must have suffered much to lose all that you loved." And her heart yearned towards that solitary being.

"I never loved them! Neither wife or child! And had little cause. The one broke her heart and died with a smile on her face that was worse than a curse! And the other deserted me for a villain, and suffered, and perished too! I married for ambition, and when I would have loved years afterwards with all

the strength and passion of a first attachment, met only with scorn and hatred! Scorn which I shall yet live to revenge ten thousand fold! But why do I tell you this?" added he, suddenly lifting up his white and livid face.

"Because I can sympathise with and pity you," replied Amy gently.

"What you, you pity me! Why this is mockery!" And the old man laughed aloud, but for all that, his mirth was very terrible. "Girl," said he after a pause, "you cannot sympathise with me—you have never known what it is to hate all the world but one, and find that one indifferent, nay worse, daring enough to make a sport and pastime of your passion to her friends—to her new lover—Curses on him! But he is gone now! And she—she shall yet writhe beneath my power!"

"Vengeance is the Lord's!" said his companion meekly. While those flashing eyes sank for a moment before her calm, pitying gaze.

"Pshaw! why should you of all others plead for her."

"I plead for no one in particular, Mr. Ormington, only to your own better nature. Oh! surely, in the very house of death, it must be wrong to cherish feelings such as these. For who shall tell which of us may be the next taken?"

The old man trembled with a strange fear while she spoke, and her words fell upon his ear like a prophesy.

"I," said he, after a pause, "almost as well as though it had already come to pass, for I shall be the next doomed! Mark well my words girl, and remember them when the time comes, but it will not be until I have had my revenge—Until that proud spirit is ground down to the very dust! and made to confess the justness of its own punishment!"

It was Amy's turn to tremble now at his wild words, and still more the excited tone in which they were uttered, while his face grew

pale and ghastly as that of a corpse. But she was saved the necessity of a reply by the entrance of Lord Dunorven and the rector; the former of whom saluted her with a tender and respectful greeting, thanking her for the blessing of her presence at such a time. And the latter came to take his leave for the present, the Countess having refused to admit even him.

“ You must not be angry with my poor mother,” said Dunorven, “ for I fear from her wild, unconnected words that she is scarcely herself yet—It was a fearful shock !”

“ It was indeed. But you will send for me, should she bye and bye, express a wish for my presence. I must leave my little Amy behind me, I suppose ?”

“ Oh ! yes,” said Dunorven eagerly. “ That is if she wishes it too ?”

“ I have promised your sisters to remain here for the present,” replied Amy.

"Ah! that is well, and will be a great comfort to them."

"Take care of yourself dear grandpapa!" whispered the girl in a tone that, low as it was, caught the quick ear of Mr. Ormington, who turned suddenly away. "For my sake and dear Cecil's too. This accident has made me a very coward."

"Yes, yes, silly child!" replied Mr. Alleyne, kissing her fondly. "And do not forget to write to Cecil, who will be anxious to receive the assurance of your forgiveness."

"As if I could forget—Or he doubt it?" replied Amy.

Miss St. Aubyn would also have taken her departure at this juncture, but for the earnest entreaties of the Countess. But Mr. Ormington had evidently no intention of shortening his visit, although he must have felt the restraint of his presence upon all, and especially the grief-stricken and well nigh distracted widow. It is true that Dunorven had said

something about a hope, that the present fearful accident would not have the effect of driving him away, unless he wished it. Mere words of course, which the same spirit of courtesy and good breeding that had prompted him to utter, should have made his guest respond to in a like manner. And yet after all, there is something false and hollow in such civility, and we well deserve to be punished for it occasionally, by being taken at our word.

Happening once to mention in his mother's presence, his intention of giving his old friend a gentle hint upon the subject; for Dunorven could not be blind to the secret feeling of abhorrence still visible in her look and manner towards him, he was surprised by the Countess earnestly requesting that he would do no such thing.

"Is it possible that his presence can give you pleasure dear mother? I had thought otherwise."

"Not pleasure certainly," replied the Countess shudderingly, "but he must stay!"

"Nay he shall not if it moves you thus."

"I tell you Dunorven, that he must and shall! But I forget," she added wildly and bitterly, "you are lord and master here now—at least you think so."

"No indeed dear mother!" And he knelt down by the side of the couch on which she lay, and pressed her white and faded hands fondly in his. "No one shall rule here but you."

"You promise me that?"

"I do most solemnly, only love me still as you used."

"Always, always, my noble boy!—But—but—some day—years hence perhaps, for you are still very young—you will be thinking of marrying—"

Then my wife's will shall be yours," interrupted Dunorven, with a smile, "and you will only have one child more to love and obey you."

"But she must be worthy of my love, remember that."

"I could not give my own else dear mother! I venture to promise that she shall be most beautiful and gentle."

"Aye, and gently born!" interrupted the Countess, bending an eager and searching gaze upon his countenance.

"Is this indispensable?" asked Dunorven, turning pale.

"It is to my happiness—nay to my ever consenting to receive her as your wife"

"Mother you may change your mind—There may be circumstances—"

"Aye, right my son, there may be circumstances when it shall seem as though I had no cause to be thus proud."

Dunorven bent eagerly towards her, gathering a vain hope from those wild words.

"Let us say no more about it, then, until that time comes," said he soothingly, and anxious to save her from all further pain.

“ But meanwhile you will not deceive—you will not disappoint all my fairest and brightest hopes for you Dunorven ? You will obey me in all things—said you not so my son ? ”

“ Yes, yes ; be calm dear mother ! ”

“ And I may trust you ? ”

“ You may ! ”

“ God be thanked for this ! ” exclaimed the Countess. “ There is one weight at least removed from off my mind.”

“ Would that I could also soothe away every other care,” said Dunorven affectionately, “ and who knows but what I might if you would only confide them to me.

“ No, no, not now ; you will know all soon. Go now and play the host, and remember that it be the courteous one, for much depends upon that.”

“ What a strange influence does this old man seem to possess over our destinies ! ” mused Dunorven. “ His name was the last upon my father’s lips, and now, my mother, who seemed

so much to dread his coming, equally fears his departure. It was but yesterday, Anne tells me, that she entreated her almost with tears to seem less cold and haughty towards him, and yet her own manner is full of fear and abhorrence. Will the mystery ever be solved ?” and just then, Amy’s kind, pitying look, as he entered the room, put everything else out of his head.

Although the Earl of Castle Coombe, had been but little known among his tenantry, his sudden and fearful death could not fail to cast a gloom over the whole village. The old folks talked about it among themselves, as the aged love to do, shaking their heads and looking very wise and mysterious all the time, advertising to vague rumours which had reached them in by-gone days, and then to the sad and visible change that had made the late Earl, although still in the prime of life, look prematurely old and withered, drawing from thence many a dark surmise. There were not a few among

them who hinted at his accident as one of those judgments which are sure, sooner or later, to overtake the wicked, a supposition in general as erroneous as it is presumptuous, for who are we, to question or explain the mysterious decrees of a kind and overruling Providence ? whose very afflictions, however terrible and hard to be borne they may at first appear, are but so many blessings in disguise ; and yet how common it is to find pity itself lost in this vindictive feeling ; and a retribution ascribed where none was ever meant or deserved. In general, however, all their gossiping was sure to end in blessings and eulogiums upon the new Earl, whose kind smile and merry face rendered him a universal favourite with both old and young.

“ Lady Charlotte is the only one of the family who seems at all likely to take after her brother,” said an aged woman. “ And it will be many years yet before we find much thought in that wild, young head ; and yet it does me good

to hear her laugh, and see her look so merry. As for her stately sister, she swims by like one of the white swans upon the lake, never looking to the right or the left, or thinking that there is a creature in the world to be cared for but herself."

"Nay," said another, "to do her justice it is but her time—and words—and smiles which she grudges us, not remembering that they are everything to the poor. Otherwise she is liberal enough as far as money goes."

"Yes, as though one could buy love."

This is a mistake which many of our fair aristocracy, besides the Lady Anne, are continually falling into. Some really from want of time and opportunity, but the far greater number from mere lack of inclination.

"It's my opinion," said the first speaker, "that if his proud mother don't put her spoke in the wheel, the young Earl will be giving us bye and by a Countess after his own heart,

who will see to our comforts and happiness s though they were her own."

"What, good Miss Amy Fitzallan you mean?"

"Who else; is she not the friend and guardian angel of the poor?"

"Aye, and well deserves to be made a lady of. But it won't be!" added the old crone shaking her palsied head. "Such things don't happen now-a-days—or only in old ballads."

"And why not good mother?" asked a young girl, who had drawn near to listen to their gossip.

"Because no one marries for love as they used to do, and it ain't right that they should altogether. Suppose bye and by—I only say suppose, for I do not think it likely, although there was some talk years ago of a certain casket belonging to Miss Amy's mother, and thought by Mrs. Hopkins to contain jewels of sufficient value to recompense her for all the

trouble and expense she had incurred, which proved, on being opened, to be filled with nothing but stones and rubbish—Suppose, I say, that she was to turn out in the end to be the child of some common swindler ?”

“ But that would not be her fault mother.”

“ No, but he could not love her then.”

“ Why, not ? I should have thought he would have done so all the more, seeing how much she needed it.”

“ Then you would have thought like a silly child !” replied the woman abruptly. Forgetting that the young always reason thus, and how they grow wiser in time without becoming any the happier. “ But go away and mind your work, for you know nothing about it !”

“ Or you either,” thought the girl with a toss of her pretty head. “ But what should such a set of old fogies know about love now ? They must have forgotten all they ever did, long since.”

Or what should she herself, who was but

fifteen and some few odd months ? But then girls always think themselves wondrous learned in such matters, which learning seems indeed to come to them very often by instinct a long time before it does from experience.

CHAPTER V

Some time had now elapsed since the death of the Earl of Castle Coombe, and still Mr. Ormington remained an unbidden and unwelcome guest ; but he was sadly changed, and had grown feeble, and older, as it would seem by a dozen years at least, since that fatal accident. And more sarcastic and ill humoured, if it was possible than ever.

The Countess was yet an invalid, and seldom quitted her own apartment, while the gentle Lady Anne, assisted by Miss Maxwell, played the graceful hostess to perfection ; that is, she suffered all her guests to do exactly as they pleased, and thought her duty well performed if she was ready to meet them full dressed at stated hours. Once again Lady Charlotte's merry voice might be heard ringing like music through the Castle, hushed at times by a sudden recollection of the past, and then breaking forth again in irrepressible joyousness, while Amy, scarcely less glad-hearted, joined willingly in every mirthful scheme which she invented to enliven the rest of the party, or cheat even the grave housekeeper, and she had grown graver than ever of late, either in sympathy with, or imitation of her mistress, into a smile.

The young Earl had never once adverted, since her return, to the past, although his manner had lost none of its former kindness,

and Amy again loved and confided in him as a friend and brother; and yet he too was changed, and had become pale, and thin, and hollow-eyed, while his once joyous voice was but seldom heard. The Countess knowing the struggle between duty and affection going on in the heart of her noble boy, could only sympathise with him in silence, shewing that she did so by redoubled manifestations of love and kindness; and so great was Dunorven's regard for this dear mother, that at such times he felt almost happy, and as though no sacrifice of his own individual feelings which he could make to spare one hope or prejudice of hers, would be too great. The Countess however would fain have emancipated him from the daily trial he endured in Amy's presence, for who could be constantly with and help loving her? But Mr. Ormington to whom with a quivering lip, and flushed brow, she thought proper to mention her intention of persuading

Dunorven to travel for a few months, uttered his negative in a tone that sounded so much like a command, that no more was said upon the subject.

“ You are just the person I was wishing for, Anne,” said the young Earl to his sister, as she entered the room to search for something which it was evident she did not want, or more likely in consequence of having seen the post-boy just ride away from the Castle gate. “ Here is a letter from Trevallion, one half of which is in the postscript bye the bye. Do answer it for me there’s a dear girl, and say I have the headache or the heartache, or what you like, that is if you think Trevallion will require an apology.”

Lady Anne took it in silence, and with a faint colour upon her fair cheek.

“ What should I do without you,” said her brother with a half smile, and a fond kiss, “ my little patient amanuensis.”

"But is your head really so bad, Dunorven?"

"Or your heart?" asked Lady Charlotte archly.

"No do not look so anxious, dear sisters, or I must really exert myself to answer the letter in my own hand, lest you should think me very ill, or very lazy."

"At least we may think you very kind," whispered Lady Charlotte as her sister retreated hastily with her prize, as though fearful that he might actually put his playful threat into execution. "How happy Anne looks, heigho! I wish I had a lover, only in that case he should write to me straight, and no nonsense. Don't you, Miss Fitzallan?"

"You might find one very troublesome," said Amy looking up with a bright smile.

"Yes, if they write such letters as that, I very likely should. Four sheets of foolscap filled, and one crossed."

"No only letter paper," replied the laughing Amy.

"Full of sweet things no doubt."

"Yes, indeed, Lady Charlotte. Some for you if you like. Such delicious wedding cake!"

"What, is Mr. Grey married?" asked Mr. Ormington abruptly, raising his keen eyes from the page before him, while Amy wondered how he came to guess that it was from Cecil; and yet it was easy enough too, when she had so few letters sent her.

"No, not Mr. Grey, but Miss Drummond, so you see you were wrong about that."

"Yes, there is seldom much truth in such reports," replied the old man coldly. "It was but the other day I heard that he had been engaged to you for years."

"Ah, who could have told you that?" exclaimed Amy with a burning blush.

"I forget now, but of course one rumour was about as probable as the other, and we shall be hearing of your wedding next."

"Oh, how nice that would be," said Lady Charlotte, "with Clara and I for bridesmaids, and Dunorven should give you away."

The young Earl started from his seat and walked hastily to the window.

"Fear not," said Mr. Ormington in a whisper, as he followed him with slow and feeble steps, "such a sacrifice will not be demanded of you."

"Ah! you know my secret then," exclaimed Dunorven betrayed for the moment out of his usual self-possession.

"I do, and you shall yet marry her you love, in spite of all the prejudices of rank and pride."

"No, not in spite of them," said Dunorven firmly, "but if I could only hope that time would subdue their violence."

"Hope everything then, for I tell you that she shall be yours, and with the full consent, nay, at the express command of her who now opposes it."

"God bless you for those words!" said the young lover, grasping the withered hand of his mysterious friend, in both his own, "they have removed a fearful weight from off my mind."

That blessing sounded in Mr. Ormington's ears almost like a curse.

"But when?" continued Dunorven earnestly.

"Nay, you must wait patiently. Why, I waited for my revenge for almost five and twenty years!"

"And forgave long before that period was one quarter elapsed," replied his companion.

"I am sure I should."

"Pshaw, boy! You have never been tried. Suppose—only suppose the affection of her you love bestowed upon another. Would you not hate and curse him?"

"I would try not for her sake."

"And sit calmly down perhaps, and see your bride borne from you?"

"If it was for her happiness," replied the

young Earl, while his flashing eyes and quivering lips bespoke the struggle which such magnanimity would cost him.

"Ah! this is all very well in theory," said his companion, with a slight accent of contempt. "But what if she added scorn, and bitter mockery to her rejection, making it a theme of mirthful ridicule among her friends and kindred—a strange jest for the ears of her titled and therefore accepted suitor. What would you do then?"

"Repay scorn for scorn!" replied Dunorven quickly. "And cast her from my heart forever!"

"And think you there is a fiercer hatred than that which springs thus from the ashes of love?"

"Perhaps not, and yet it must sometimes be quenched in softened memories of the past."

"Never, never for an instant, it has burnt on unceasingly ever since, and will do until the

end! Not all the tears in the world can put it out now—and she knows it.”

“Is it possible,” asked Dunorven compassionately, “that you can have felt all this?”

“Pshaw!” replied Mr. Ormington turning away, “one does not always speak from experience, especially when they grow as old, and have lived as long in the world as I have.”

“Now do tell us all about the wedding, Miss Fitzallan,” said Lady Charlotte. “What the bride was dressed in, and how she looked and behaved? One always takes a strange interest in these matters.”

“Oh! very much like other brides, Mr. Grey says, and you know, being a man, we cannot expect him to describe her dress, or understand much about it. Very pretty and interesting, blushing a great deal, and crying a little. For my own part I could never rightly comprehend why brides should cry at such a time.”

"I don't know," said Lady Charlotte, "but it seems natural too, and is certainly expected of them."

"It is paying the husband but a poor compliment," added Amy.

"But then they weep for their early homes."

"Oh! they must have made up their minds to that long since, before they consented to have him who is henceforth to be father, mother, all to them."

"Then I suppose you do not mean to weep at your own bridal?" said Mr. Ormington, who had again joined the little group of busy workers and talkers; or rather sat as usual apart, with a book in his hand, the pages of which were but seldom turned.

"I hope not."

"I hope not too, Miss Fitzallan, but it is more than probable."

There was something in the tone and manner in which this sentence was uttered, rather than

in the words themselves, which caused Amy to look up half fearfully, half wonderingly, into the stern face of her companion.

"Well!" said the old man coldly.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ormington, but you really do say such strange things, and in such a strange way."

"Then it is I who should beg your pardon, I suppose."

"Oh! no, I was very silly! But what were we talking about?"

"Brides weeping on their wedding day," said Lady Charlotte.

"May they not be sometimes tears of joy?" suggested Miss St. Aubyn.

"Ah! yes," said Amy, "I had forgotten that, and it entirely alters the case. How often do we weep at what we are glad of!"

"And smile, when if we dared we should shed tears!" observed Clara, scarcely conscious that she was speaking aloud.

"I never felt that."

"And it is to be hoped that you never will, my dear Miss Fitzallan!"

"Will you walk over to the rectory with me before dinner?" asked Amy. "I must give Mr. Alleyne some of this nice cake."

"Can we not all go?" said the young Earl.

Miss St. Aubyn was just upon the point of reminding him of the distance, and his poor lame foot; but recollected herself in time. How difficult it is to get rid of a bad habit. But already had she reaped the reward of her long forbearance, and self control in Dunorven's altered manner; who now sought rather than shunned her society—or else the girl fancied it. Poor Clara! We are apt to fancy these things sometimes, and the illusion passes away all too soon.

"Certainly if you like," said Amy, "and will not find the way too long."

"Do you mean that as a hint that you would rather be without my company, Miss Fitzallan?"

“Take it as you like,” replied the girl with a bright smile that settled the point at once; and not exactly in the way she wished, for she would have much preferred a *tête-à-tête* with Miss St. Aubyn, whose countenance however evinced but little sympathy with her feelings.

But for Clara’s anxious fears lest the young Earl would afterwards suffer from the exertion, how she would have enjoyed that fresh, breezy walk through the green fields, with Dunorven’s voice ringing like music in her ears. For the words of Mr. Ormington, few and mysterious as they had been, seemed to have infused new life into him.

“What flower do you call this, Miss Fitzallan?” asked the Earl stooping to gather one that grew amid the soft grass. But Amy was no botanist, she only knew that she loved them dearly! And even Miss St. Aubyn, who had at one time actually kept a *Hortus Siccus* was equally at fault. And after a variety of guessing, and much laughter, it was eventually con-

signed to Amy to be examined at her leisure, while a slight pang shot through the heart of her companion, although she smiled a moment after to see her unconsciously picking it to pieces as they walked along, and scattering the fragments to the wind.

"She does not love him," thought Clara, and she was right, that little incident was worth a volume.

"Is that the way you serve my flower, Miss Fitzallan?" said the young Earl in a vexed tone.

"I really beg your pardon, I must have been thinking of something else. Although I do not see the good of keeping it, for I should never have found out its Latin name. Certainly I might have given it to Mr. Alleyne, and got him to do it for me."

Dunorven walked on in silence, her simplicity had completely disconcerted him, and the next flower they came to, which was more

curious than the rest, he gave it to Miss St. Aubyn. Never thinking to notice the deep crimson flush which mantled her fair cheek, or the timid joy in her soft blue eyes, as she hastily concealed her first relic. And so in this strange world of ours, are we perpetually playing like children, a wild and dangerous game of cross purposes.

The good rector received his guests with a quiet courtesy peculiar to himself; and the simple repast which he ordered for their refreshment, although consisting of little else than bread and fruits, seemed a thousand times more sweet and dainty, than the choicest luncheon that Mrs. Jelf, with all her skill, could provide. But then Amy did the honors so gently and gracefully, her thoughts all the time far away. Even as though the long cherished dream of her young life was realised at length, only that its idol was missing from its accustomed place, and there instead sat the

Earl with his eyes fixed admiringly upon her changeful countenance.

"I would give something, Miss Fitzallan, to know of what you are now thinking," said he at length.

Amy started and coloured.

"I fancy I can guess pretty nearly," observed the rector with a smile.

"And I too," added Miss St. Aubyn.

"Oh no, Mr. Alleyne may perhaps, but not you."

Clara bent forward and whispered a few words which sent a sudden flush to the brow of her companion; and then they both laughed and looked so happy, and each from a different cause, that the young Earl was quite bewildered.

"Then I am not to be let into the secret?" said he.

"No, you must find it out," replied Amy a little confused, although from his manner and

his having never since alluded to that passionate declaration which had given her so much uneasiness the day they visited Fern Castle, she fancied that he must long ago have forgotten all about it, and the discovery when made would not affect him. But Miss St. Aubyn was less sanguine; and even the good rector had his doubts, as he marked every look and tone of his young guest; thinking it as well that Amy should leave the Castle for a short time; a proposition which was met however with so much displeasure that he yielded for the present to their persuasions.

“Why we should not know what to do without her,” said the Earl, “should we Miss St. Aubyn?” and then fortunately for her he went on without waiting her reply, setting down the point at once as indisputable. “As Martha says, was it not she who paid you that pretty compliment, Miss Fitzallan? The sun never seems to shine when you are not by to smile upon us all.”

" Ah, Martha loves me, and thinks- herself privileged to utter what nonsense she likes."

" And do you think that we do not love you too, Amy?"

" I am sure I don't know—only that you are very kind," replied the girl shrinking from his earnest gaze.

" You do not say a word, Miss St. Aubyn," exclaimed Dunorven, " she would believe you perhaps—but good heavens you are ill, my dear Clara, what has happened?"

" Nothing, it is nothing," replied she, while a sudden and crimson flush chased away the marble paleness of cheek and brow. Those words, and that accent would have recalled her from the brink of the grave.

" It must be these flowers," said the simple rector, " I am used to sit among them thus, but they may be overpowering coming out of the air."

" No, do not move them it would be a pity, I am better now."

“ Yes, you are looking quite yourself again. But you frightened me with that wild glance.”

“ Did I look wild?” said the girl with an embarrassed air.

“ Yes, indeed—but do not go turning pale again. What shall we do with her, Amy?”

“ She will be better when we begin to walk, and you must let her lean upon your arm.”

Simple Amy! And yet you were a good physician too. The patient seemed to evince little repugnance to following this advice, while the care and attention of the good natured Earl soon succeeded in restoring the bloom to her cheeks and the light to her eyes. And yet she leant very gently too, for fear of wearying him; and spoke but little, thinking that there was another voice which he would better love to listen to than hers. All three however seemed in a strangely silent mood, but little more conversation passing between them, until

they entered the house just as the dinner bell rang, and Lady Anne finished her fourth sheet of paper, and one must have had some experience of that delicate Italian hand, in order to be able to calculate what an incredible quantity of matter could be got into that space. The mystery was what she could have found to write about. And yet it is one easily solved by the initiated, who would rather wonder, as the girl herself did while folding it up, how she had ever managed to get all she had to say into so small a compass.

"Thank you, Anne," said the Earl, patting her playfully on the cheek as he passed, "this is conferring a favor generously, and, in the right spirit. But I am sorry to have kept you in all this bright morning!"

"Indeed I do not regret it, brother. It is such a pleasure to do anything for you, who are so kind to everybody."

Did Lady Anne really pride herself upon her sisterly feeling, and think she had been obliging

him? Nay, she was not quite so simple. Did she regret the loss of her walk, and look upon the morning as one wasted? Not if we may judge by the happy smile upon her beautiful face as she seals up the letter, and goes herself to put it in the letter bag for fear of an accident, or it should not be sent in time, or get lost. Just as if that particular letter was in more danger than any other, but we are always apt to fancy so. And take a wonderful deal of trouble about nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

“What do you think?” said Lady Charlotte to her sister, “Mamma has actually sent for Mr. Ormington, and there they are closetted together in her boudoir.”

“That I wish Dunorven was at home,” said Lady Anne.

“Nay, sister Anne, one would imagine him, by that look, to be some great Ogre, who would eat her up at a mouthful. And after all, as Amy

says, he may not be so very terrible, and it is only his manners which have made us take such a dislike to him."

"Miss Fitzallan always thinks well of every one," said Clara St. Aubyn with a smile. "So her evidence stands for nothing."

"But I really do not believe Mamma hates him as much as she did, for she is always reminding me to be on my good behaviour; and was quite angry at my wishing him gone the other day."

"I cannot fancy any one ever loving him," said Amy, "but depend upon it, Mr. Ormington is more to be pitied than disliked, and it is sorrow and disappointment that has changed and soured his temper thus."

"Satire born of suffering!" quoted the laughing Lady Charlotte, "you are positively making him out a very interesting sort of personage. But I wonder what it is Mamma can have to say to him so particularly."

The curiosity of the little group was never

gratified. But as we have no intention of keeping our gentle readers in a similar state of suspense, we shall introduce them at once into that mysterious boudoir.

The Countess, magnificently attired, and still beautiful even in her declining health, reclined upon one of the silken couches, but the regal pride had departed from her high, white brow, and the small, jewelled hands were clasped hopelessly together. Mr. Ormington sat on a high backed chair exactly opposite, his feet scarcely touching the ground, while his slight, attenuated form was bent eagerly forward, and his keen, flashing eyes rivetted upon her changeful countenance.

"Shall I trouble you to draw closer that blind?" said the Countess to her companion.
"The light dazzles me."

Mr. Ormington smiled slightly as he obeyed her, and then once again resumed his former place and attitude.

"You wanted to speak to me did you not?"

said he at length, breaking the silence which had until then reigned between them.

“ I did.” And then again the Countess paused, and gasped for breath.

“ Do not hurry yourself,” replied her strange companion. “ I can await your leisure.”

“ No, I must speak to you now—this suspense is destroying me day by day! How is all this to end?”

“ How do you think?”

“ That you will be merciful!” replied the Countess, raising her dark eyes imploringly to that stony countenance, and then averting them again in despair.

“ Aye, as merciful as you were when I prayed and supplicated thus to you; and you drove me from you with scorn and bitter mockery, making merry of the old man’s presumption among your friends! but the laugh will be all his now.”

The Countess buried her face in the silken pillows of the couch, and answered not.

“Henriette, I loved you as men love but once. You knew it, and smiled—and lured me on, until a richer suitor came, dismissing me then with words which burnt into my very brain. I cursed you in my wild despair! for more than four and twenty years I prayed for vengeance, and then, all at once, the boon became unexpectedly mine. Forgetful of the past, the Earl, your husband, forced himself into my presence, for hitherto I had shunned him as I would a pestilence; but he had heard that I was rich, and reckless, and thought to win the old man’s money. We played, it was his wish, night after night even until the grey dawn broke in upon us, desperately—madly at last! for fortune favored me, and he was well nigh frantic with his losses. Until in the end even the very home of his forefathers, the rich heritage of Castle Coombe became mine—his enemys! and after that he was my slave! Rich and old, with neither kith or kin in the whole world, it seems he flattered himself that

I should soon die and leave it to him again ; or withdraw all claim to the estate, as I have done more than once, to others who were my debtors, but then they had never injured me. He knew not that those lands were more precious to me than the wealth of worlds ! and no doubt this prayer was on his lips, this hope in his heart when he died."

" And does not this move you ?"

" Only to rejoice that I was not by to destroy it, and so prevent his departing in peace. I owe him no grudge now that he is in his grave !"

" But his son—you love his son ?" said the Countess eagerly.

" Could I forget that he was yours I might."

" Then let the blow fall on me only, and spare him.—Are you not satisfied now—Nay for his sake I will supplicate upon my knees for forgiveness of the past !—Oh ! shall man dare to be less merciful than God ?" And the proud Countess wrung her hands in agony.

"Thus did I kneel once to you," replied Mr. Ormington, in the same cold, measured tone, while a gleam of triumph passed over his aged face. "And how was I answered?"

"Forgive me—I was young—and proud—and wilful!"

"And I am old,—and vindictive—and revengeful.—Henriette, as you spurned and scorned me then, so do I now thy request!"

The Countess rose up instantly and her face was calm although fearfully pale.

"When do we go?" asked she in a hollow voice.

"Nay, I am in no hurry to be rid of my guests, and should indeed find the old place somewhat dull without them."

"This is mockery," replied his companion.
"When do we go?"

"Never, if you will be guided by me. But the deed shall be destroyed, and the past buried in oblivion!"

"Proceed," said the Countess, bending eagerly towards him, while the keen eyes of the old man gleamed with malicious triumph. "Name your conditions, there is nothing from which I will shrink for his sake!"

"Perhaps you would not spurn this withered hand with the same scorn that you once did?"

The Countess shuddered.

"Nay fear not, I would not wed you now, beautiful as you still are, while I am old and grief-stricken. The love of the past has changed to hatred! And yet it is of a marriage that I would speak to you—Of Dunorven's."

"Time enough" said the Countess fearfully, "he is but young yet."

"I doubt whether he thinks so. I have however some strange and original ideas upon this subject, and am determined that he shall marry for love. You did not think I had been so romantic Henriette? But much of our future happiness I am convinced depends upon it.

Have you ever had cause to suspect that he has a *penchant* for any one in particular?"

"I think not," said the Countess hurriedly, "Dunorven has too much pride—he loves me too well to deceive me."

"I had given you credit for being more keen sighted. He loves Amy Fitzallan—the unknown orphan—the dependant upon your bounty! I too have taken a fancy to this merry-eyed, but somewhat wilful little enchantress, and her dowry shall be the broad lands of Castle Coombe!"

"Mr. Ormington," exclaimed the Countess, while a sudden light broke over her mind, "it may be that the mystery of her birth is not unknown to you—And she is worthy of Dunorven's love? Oh! tell me in mercy if it be so!"

"Yes I knew her father once," said the old man.

"And he—?"

"Was the greatest villain that ever walked the earth!"

"It is enough," said the Countess proudly. "My son may lose his rich heritage he may become a beggar, and an alien from his native land, but the noble blood of our race shall never know taint or disgrace."

"And have you but one child Henriette? Think you that the aristocratic Trevallion will wed your gentle Anne, when he finds out that she is the daughter of a gambler, the penniless offspring of a ruined house."

"My poor girl!" exclaimed the Countess "and yet even for thy happiness I cannot sacrifice your brother's honour!"

"And you would cast forth this idolised son upon the world, with his luxurious tastes, his refined habits, his lameness, utterly incapacitating him from all exertion, to gratify your own hereditary pride?"

"I would, watching and keeping guard over

him, that he shall not suffer over much from the change, and my own little property is sufficient to enable us to live independently abroad. Anything rather than see him the husband of that artful and low-born girl ! You confess that her father was a villain, and from what has reached my ears of late, her mother can have been little better than a common swindler ! leaving behind a casket of stones which she had passed off for jewels, and buried out of charity by those whom she had attempted to defraud."

"Go on !" said the old man laughing wildly, while the large drops of agony stood like beads upon his pallid brow.

"And you would have Dunorven marry her ? You would leave her your wealth in preference to the son of one whom you once professed to love ?" The voice of the Countess faltered slightly as she spoke, but her companion remained unmoved.

“ Aye, in preference to the son of her who scorned and despised that love ! But in good truth I like the girl ; she never shunned me as others did, or passed me by like the Lady Anne, with a toss of her graceful head, or laughed and mocked when my back was turned, like her more sprightly sister ; and in return for all this, she shall be heiress of Castle Coombe !”

“ And have you told her so ?”

“ Not yet ; I would hear your decision first.”

“ I have already decided !” replied the Countess hastily.

“ And you will sacrifice Dunorven’s happiness to a mere chimera of pride ?”

“ I will preserve his honour—the honour of our ancient name at any risk.”

“ But what if the matter be referred to him, and he chose to act for himself ?”

“ Then, much as he may love this girl, he

will scorn to buy back his lost heritage thus—to owe all to his wife, even if she were a Princess, instead of a nameless and base born beggar !”

“ I believe you are right,” said the old man in the same unmoved tone,” and, therefore, you shall decide for him, and save his proud and sensitive spirit from the knowledge of that which would so deeply wound it. He does love Amy Fitzallan, and you know it ! His happiness rests in your keeping.”

“ It is in vain that you urge me thus,” said the Countess, pressing her hands convulsively to her temples, as if to still their wild beatings, while every throb of agony was one of triumph to her companion. “ He shall not marry her !”

“ Nay, you will change your mind.”

“ Never, never, I tell you !”

“ At any rate I will not hear your decision now, but give you one week from this day.”

"Be it so," said the Countess eagerly, and with a wild, vain hope that he might have relented before then; but she knew him not when she dreamed thus. "But you will not mention it even to her until that time be passed?"

"No, your secret is safe for the present. It is safe for ever if you will be guided by me."

The Countess motioned him haughtily to leave her.

"It was thus that you once before bid me depart," muttered the old man, between his closed teeth, "only you smiled then, and now you weep."

"Forgive me!" exclaimed the grief-stricken woman in a humbled tone. And as she stretched forth her white, jewelled hand, he almost started to see how it had faded since then. "Yes, you have been fearfully avenged," she added, reading his thoughts with all her sex's

quickness. "Are you not satisfied even yet?"

"Not yet," repeated her companion, in a cold, deliberate tone. "The sufferings you have endured for months only, was the bitter portion you bestowed on me for four and twenty long and weary years!"

The Countess turned despairingly away, and flinging herself upon the couch, wept long and passionately: while Mr. Ormington, after lingering a moment with something between a smile and a sneer upon his pale, quivering lips, departed with noiseless steps.

"He is gone then," said the Countess, raising herself up at length, and putting back the hair from her damp brow. "And there is no hope! O! God be merciful! Give me strength to humble my haughty pride—my rebellious will—to sacrifice the dearest hope of my life, rather than sorrow or affliction should fall upon Dunorven! And if he does not see the shame

of marrying this low born girl, neither will I for his sake. For what is there that I would not do for him? My beautiful and queen-like Anne too! Ormington was right, she must not be sacrificed. I will be the only victim. He shall have his revenge, and every prejudice of rank and station be trampled unsparingly into the dust for them—for Dunorven—my idolized boy! so that no grief may come near him. But I have a week yet—a whole week! and who knows what may have happened before then? He may die—for I have known deaths as sudden—Heaven forgive me for a thought that comes almost like a wish! Or he may relent. He loved me once, and Dunorven always, until this designing girl crept in between like a serpent. But I forget that I am speaking of the heiress of Castle Coombe!—of my future daughter-in-law!” And again the poor Countess bowed down and wept tears which saved her from frenzy, until aroused at

length by the kindly accents of a low and gentle voice.

"Forgive me for intruding upon you thus," said Clara St. Aubyn, kneeling down beside the couch, "but as I passed the door I heard you weeping, and thought I might possibly be of use."

"My poor child! My poor Clara!" exclaimed the Countess, and now she no longer wept for herself alone.

"No, no, not poor now, dear mother! for you must let me call you so. Within the last few months I have felt quite another being, so light-hearted, and happy, and so well! And Dunorven, instead of shunning me as he used, seems to take a pleasure in lingering by my side."

"You think so, do you?"

"I am sure of it, presumptuous that I am!" added Clara, with a bright smile that sought to cheer the grief in which she was not allowed to

participate. "And all this I owe to you and your kind advice."

"I remember, I gave you hopes that may never be realized."

"Yes, I thought so then."

"And now, Clara?"

The girl buried her face upon the shoulder of her companion and answered not.

"How we deceive ourselves!" thought the Countess sadly. "And yet if it could be so, her fortune would still enable him to maintain his proper station in society; and she would not love him less that he was poor. But no, his heart is not hers, even Mr. Ormington has discovered this, the girl must be blind indeed even to dream of it. And what chance has she beside the beautiful and fascinating Amy Fitzallan?"

"Do you think me very presumptuous?" asked the girl, looking up at length into the half averted face of her companion.

"No, no, but perhaps, a little too sanguine."

"It may be so, but do not damp my bright hopes with that sorrowful look. Even if it should turn out to be but a dream, it will have made me very happy, and I can then die!"

"Hush!" said the Countess, "you must not talk thus. We do not die when grief comes, but must live and endure."

"Yes I was wrong dear mother! I shall be content to live all my life afterwards upon its memory."

Poor Clara! she knew not how sad a thing it is for the existence of the young to be swallowed up thus in the past; while the present and the future seem alike a blank.

"It has been the hope of my life," continued the girl, to be permitted to devote it to him, and to make up by my constant and unceasing vigilance, for that affliction of which I was the innocent cause. It seemed, indeed, as if it

were not mine, but his who preserved it at the hazard of his own."

"May it be realised my Clara!" said the Countess, pressing her cold lips to the fair brow of her companion; and even as she spoke, she shuddered at the idle mockery of her own words.

"Thanks—a thousand thanks! But can I do nothing for you? I wish you would mingle more with us, it must be so dull sitting here alone; and Amy Fitzallan is so merry that I think she would cheer one up, and make them laugh, if they were ever so ill and low spirited."

"You like her then?"

"Ah! who can help it?"

Her companion sighed.

"Leave me," said she, after a pause. "I think I should be better if I could sleep for a few hours—it is so long since I have known what it is to have a good night's rest. O God! shall I ever know rest again?"

"Nay, it is my turn to chide now," said Miss St. Aubyn, soothingly, "you will be better very soon."

The Countess shook her head despairingly, and felt thankful when Clara, having arranged the pillows, and carefully excluded all light, left her to that repose which she so much needed. And did it come? Do the wretched ever sleep? Yes, sometimes, thanks, be to Heaven for it!"

CHAPTER VII.

DUNORVEN, who had gone to pay a visit to a family living out of the immediate neighbourhood of Castle Coombe, to whom they owed some little civility, was absent nearly the whole day, much to the secret uneasiness of his mother and sisters; although not a word passed the lips of either, which could lead the other to guess what was in their inmost thoughts. Even Lady Anne, on the contrary, seemed more

than usually gay, while her sister laughed incessantly; and Amy and Miss St. Aubyn laid their heads together to devise a thousand plans with which to cheer and amuse the Countess.

"Did Dunorven mention his intention of staying so late?" enquired the mother at length, unable any longer to conceal the wild fears to which his protracted absence gave rise.

"He could have scarcely got back before I think," replied Lady Charlotte promptly, and cheerfully. "How I envy him his drive home this bright moonlight night!"

"Is it moonlight?"

"Yes, only look, dear mamma!" exclaimed the girl drawing back the curtains from before the window. "One might almost see to read by it."

"Do not close them again Charlotte, and put the window a little open. We shall hear him coming all the sooner."

"He had no business to go such a distance

by himself," grumbled Mr. Ormington, as he arose to retire to bed. "And so I told him, but its no use arguing with young people, they will have their way in the end."

"To be sure," said Amy, springing up to light his candle for him, for his hand trembled strangely, "Who would not, as long as they could get it?"

"Well added, Miss Fitzallan," replied the old man, taking it from her without a word of thanks, and quitting the room with slow and tottering steps, for he had grown very feeble of late. But he did not immediately retire to rest, but stood looking down the moonlight avenue with an anxious and troubled glance. The Countess was right in imagining that he loved the young Earl as much as it was in his nature to love any one.

"Thank goodness he's gone!" exclaimed Amy, as the door closed. An ejaculation which the proud Countess re-echoed in her heart. "I feel

somehow as if I could breathe more freely when Mr. Ormington is not by."

"Take care," said Lady Charlotte, "or he may overhear you."

"Oh, it will be nothing new to him, for I told him the very same thing to his face."

"And what did he say?"

"That he could both believe and account for it if he chose. And I thought too that I could have done the latter without his help. Oh! I hope I shall never be as disagreeable if I should chance to live to his age!"

"I hope not," said Miss Maxwell gravely. "And they say a happy youth makes a happy age."

"Aye, and his, poor man, was sadly blighted! Dunorven tells me that he was jilted in some love affair, and that soured his temper. But the only thing I find a difficulty in believing is, that he should ever have been capable of loving any one sufficiently to take it thus to heart."

"We all love once," said Miss Maxwell, "and those who seem coldest and sternest now, perhaps, the most passionately and devotedly."

"Were you ever in love?" asked Lady Charlotte, with the view of prolonging a conversation to which she could observe her mother's attention for a moment diverted from without. "Not that you are cold and stern, but good, and gentle, and patient, so that I think you must have been once."

"Yes once," replied the usually silent and placid governess, rather as if thinking aloud than actually speaking.

"And how did it end?" asked Lady Anne, bending towards her, "or perhaps it is not ended even yet."

"Oh, yes, long ago, and for ever. I was rich and proud, and so was he, but he loved me for all that, at least I thought so then. My father was an eminent banker, as you may have heard, for his name was at one time well

known until it became unfortunately linked with another less honorable, and through the villany of this new partner, together with a long series of commercial difficulties, he was reduced to ruin and disgrace."

"But what has all this to do with your lover?" asked Lady Anne, while the Countess bent forward and listened eagerly for the reply.

"Everything, for I lost him thus. His pride was greater than his love."

"Nay," said Amy caressingly, "he is not worthy of these tears, my dear Miss Maxwell."

"Oh, yes, it was but natural after all, and I never blamed him."

"Perhaps he was sorry afterwards," said Lady Charlotte.

"No, he married one who was his equal in rank and station, and they tell me is very happy. There is some comfort in that."

"Had I read this any where," thought Amy
"I could not have believed it, it seems so contrary to human nature."

But the girl was wrong after all, it was but a common and every day tale.

The Countess covered her face with her hands and wept. "Thus," thought she, "would Trevallion cast off my beautiful and gentle Anne, to become perhaps, like this poor Miss Maxwell, a broken spirited dependant upon the will of others. No, it must not—it shall not be. But I have a week yet—a whole week."

"Hark!" exclaimed Clara St. Aubyn starting up. "He is coming—I hear the sound of approaching wheels."

"Thank God!" murmured the anxious mother, and in another moment the merry voice of the young Earl was plainly heard coming up the avenue. While Mr. Ormington, extinguishing his lamp, retired grumbling to bed.

"What sitting with the window open," said Dunorven, "and my mother still up!"

"How could I rest, and you not returned?"

"Nay, forgive me, but I did not think it had been so late; and yet it was the longest day I have known for months away from you all. I cannot think how it was, Trevallion and I used to enjoy ourselves so much rambling about together abroad, but it is quite certain that we have both been spoiled since our return."

"Speak for yourself only," said Lady Charlotte laughingly.

"Anne does not think me wrong in answering for him. Do you sister mine?"

"What a plague you are, Dunorven!" said the girl with a half smile that shewed she was not very angry with him. "But tell us where you have been all this time?"

"First to visit the Davies, as I had originally intended, who were as usual most kind

and prosy ; and afterwards, finding that I had still some time upon my hands, and it was only a few miles off, I drove over to Fern Castle ; and amused myself by sauntering among its ruins, and ferretting out the very place where we dined, finding token thereof in the shape of sundry champaign corks, and a certain tiny glove worthy to have matched with Cinderella's glass slipper, which same I have brought away with me as a trophy of my morning's adventure."

" It is Clara's," said Lady Charlotte, looking at it as he held it up in triumph.

" It was rather, for it is mine now," and Dunorven gallantly replaced the faded treasure in his bosom. While the heart of the young girl throbbed wildly, when she should have laughed at, or passed it over as a mere act of common courtesy had she been wise, or not in love. But the drowning cling to a straw.

" Well, after that," continued the Earl, " I

sought out the old ruined fountain, and sitting down beside it, became so lost in thought as to take no heed of time. You remember that fountain, Miss Fitzallan?"

"Oh yes," said Amy, with a sigh for all she had suffered on that day. But it was chased away in an instant, by a still brighter smile of happiness.

Dunorven marked both the smile and the sigh, and his own spirits rose in proportion.

"Well, let me see, after that nothing remained to be done but drive home as fast as my horses could carry me, for fear you should be uneasy, dear mother, knowing what a person of consequence I am," said he smiling fondly as he kissed the small, faded hands which lay in his; and Amy ceased to wonder that Clara St. Aubyn should love him as she did, for who could help it? Who, that is, that had never known Cecil Grey?

The following morning Dunorven having

heard from his sisters of the long interview which had taken place between the Countess and Mr. Ormington, watched anxiously for the appearance of his old friend, in order that he might be able to judge by his countenance something of its import. For his mysterious assurance that Amy Fitzallan should yet be his, and that too with his mother's full consent, had never ceased to haunt him, until, impossible as it seemed, he did not doubt its truth, or the powerful influence which the eccentric old man held over his future destiny and happiness. But there was no change—no hope to be gathered from that stern and immoveable brow. He seemed indeed more than usually out of humour, most likely at being kept up so much beyond his customary hour of retiring to rest, which was generally very early; and sitting down in his old corner, either was, or chose to appear completely engrossed with the book before him.

Nothing however could damp the gay and hopeful spirit of the young Earl; and so agreeable did he make himself that Amy actually gave him the purse at last for which he had so long pleaded in vain, while Clara St Aubyn instead of being sullen or jealous about it, rummaged out some tassels and rings which seemed just to suit it, and so, as Dunorven told her with a smile that more than repaid her, enhanced the value of the gift.

"Now Lady Charlotte should sew them on," said Amy laughingly, "and you might fancy it the work of the three Graces."

"No, Anne, rather," said her sister with mock humility and real truth, "she is more like a Grace than I am, and it will be practice for her."

Lady Anne did not as usual refuse under the gentle plea of having no time, or finding it too much trouble, but willingly acquiesced,

remembering all Dunorven's thoughtful kindness to her about the letters.

"And in return," said her brother, "I have good news for you—for all of us—Mr. Trevalion is coming back."

"Not yet—not for this week I hope!" exclaimed the Countess looking up eagerly from her embroidery.

"Not for nearly a fortnight he says."

"But why do you hope?" asked Lady Anne anxiously.

"Nay, I know not, whenever he comes he is sure to be a welcome guest, for next to Dunorven there is no one whom I more honour and esteem."

"Thank you, dear mother," whispered the girl once more bending over her work with a glad look, and thereby saving Amy the trouble of interfering, who was sadly afraid at one time that the purse would have been completely spoiled.

"And thank you for not putting him before me," said Dunorven gaily. "As soon after as you like."

"A fortnight seems a long time," observed Lady Anne simply.

"Yes, to think about, but it soon slips away," replied her sister.

"How much may have happened before then," exclaimed the Countess, her glance first seeking and then shrinking from the cold, stony gaze which was rivetted so earnestly upon her.

"Aye, even a week may make great changes," said Mr. Ormington, and his voice sounded to her like a prophecy.

At this moment the servant entered with a bouquet of rare flowers for Miss Fitzallan, and the conversation, much to the relief of the Countess, took a different turn.

"How attentive this rustic lover of yours is," said the young Earl, "and what lovely

flowers, but you do not mean to keep them all surely?"

"Now miser," said Amy laughingly, "be content with your purse. However, I had intended to give you one, but you shall come last for asking for it."

"So my punishment is not to be eternal I must endeavour to bear it," replied Dunorven in the same spirit, "and yet I am not ambitious either, and should be well content with this piece of heliotrope."

"No, no," said the girl shrinking back. "That is not for you."

"Well then the hawthorn—'hope.'"

"I have no hawthorn—the time is past." The words were simple enough, but they fell sadly and coldly upon his heart. "Besides," added Amy with her usual gaiety, "I do not chose to be dictated to."

"Will you give me one of your flowers, Miss Fitzallan?" asked Mr. Ormington, looking up from his book.

"Oh yes indeed," and she went gently up to him and laid a heartsease upon its pages, for she could not bear to see an old man like him so lonely and isolated. But the countenance into which she sought to gaze was carefully averted from her.

"No, no," said he at length, and his tone was cold and stern as usual. "This is not for me. Take it to the Countess."

"I meant it for you," persisted the girl in a low, kind voice.

"It is well—but do as I bid you—she will understand the token coming from your hands."

Amy obeyed him mechanically, while the lips of her patroness grew white with rage as she received the flower thus sent, and after a while trampled it passionately beneath her feet. But none saw the action save he who had anticipated it. For the Countess had even controlled herself so far as to utter a few brief

thanks for the gift—a gift which said so much.

“Let me see, here is a lily-of-the-valley for Miss Maxwell,” and she kissed her as she presented it, while the gentle governess sighed and shook her head, for there was no “return of happiness” for her. “A rose with a sprig of myrtle for Miss St. Aubyn—mignonette for Lady Charlotte—and a white lily for Lady Anne, because Mr. Trevallion, I remember, once compared her to one.”

“And what for Dunorven?” interrupted the young Earl.

“What say you to this pretty piece of scarlet geranium?” asked Amy laughingly.

“No, that will not do at all.”

“Narcissus then—egotism you know.”

“Oh, Miss Fitzallan!”

“Well, I have really nothing else I can well spare, unless you will have this white jessamine?”

“What separation? Not if I can help it, Amy.”

"No, I should be very sorry too; I was not aware of its signification. But there, you shall chose for yourself—all but the heliotrope, and that I am going to carry with me this evening to the rectory." Amy forgot to add how it was afterwards to depart from thence, a journey of some hundred miles, to one who would know well how to prize the token.

"Now am I not very humble?" said the young Earl, as he hastily selected a little bunch of forget-me-nots, and placed them reverently in his bosom. "And yet this is not like your giving them to me."

"But I gave you leave to take them, which is all the same thing."

"Well, we will imagine so at least," replied Dunorven, amused by her simplicity, and feeling as we sometimes do in one of those bright, hopeful moods, which causeless as they are, it takes so much to cloud. And yet both stood at that very moment upon the brink of a pre-

cupice; but knowing it not, did well to rejoice. All the sorrowing in the world could have availed them nothing, and only abridged those few glad hours which, heaven knows, are rare enough! and should always be made the most of when they do occur. It is never worth while to go half way to meet trouble, although we all know that it must be borne patiently when it does come, and come it will, sooner or later to every one of us, without our ever seeking for it.

Lady Anne finished her task very neatly, and it was a wonder too, considering that her thoughts were far otherwise engaged. And the problem which she was so busily occupied in attempting to solve—what Trevallion could be coming back again for, and so soon? Nay there was nothing unnatural in it, for he had promised them to return when the law business which now required his presence in town should be finally arranged. But then why did not

Dunorven show her the letter as usual? Was he really going to answer it himself for the first time? And so much as he must have to do. How willingly would she have saved him the trouble if he had allowed her—if he had even hinted at such a thing. But for once the young Earl appeared independent of his gentle amanuensis; who thought within herself, as she watched him through her long eyelashes, folding it up, how disappointed Trevallion would be at receiving only those few lines. But she was wrong, for the letter was perused with a burst of joy, of which few who knew the proud Trevallion would have thought him capable. And for the next week or two, those lawyers whose proverbial slowness alone detained him from flying on the wings of love to ascertain the truth from the beautiful lips of her for whom her warm and simple hearted brother had thus promptly answered, were likely to have a pretty time of it. And it needs

a lover, or something equally impatient, to spur on those slow and lingering fingers which always seem to creep over their endless parchments like a snail on a wall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE week passed rapidly away without either the Countess or Mr. Ormington again alluding to the subject; but the keen glance of the old man marked the struggle going on day by day in that proud heart, and read his ultimate triumph in the pitying look with which she would sit for hours together, regarding the calm, sweet face of Clara St. Aubyn. Instead

of confining herself to her own apartment as had been so long her custom, she now mingled freely with the family circle ; and even Dunorven learnt to thread her needles, and sort her embroidery silks, when her eyes were too dim to do these things for herself. For the unbidden tears would sometimes rise in spite of all her efforts at control, at the ruin and disgrace which threatened their noble name. Or when he was not by Miss St. Aubyn supplied his place ; for the Lady Anne seemed to live in a sort of day dream, very pleasant if one might judge from her gentle countenance, as she sat with it bowed down over some of those light, feminine occupations which afford such a sweet excuse for thoughtful reverie. While her sister was too careless, and poor Amy, discouraged from offering any assistance, by the cold, repulsive manners of her patroness.

The Countess had given up all hope of working upon the sympathies of her relentless

foe ; but not one hour before the time he had himself appointed, would she gratify him with the knowledge how, for Dunorven's sake, her high, ancestral pride should be humbled in the dust at his bidding. And the portionless and unknown orphan, whose merry eyes had caught the old man's fancy, take her place in his heart and home, and become Countess of Castle Coombe.

Once or twice, as if to sound her, he adroitly led the conversation to Trevallion's expected return, but there was no shadow of change upon that marble brow, or in the bland and courteous voice with which she spoke his welcome, come when he would. While Lady Anne looked up with a happy smile, that almost seemed to repay the sacrifice ; and the kind eyes of Dunorven twinkled with an ill concealed satisfaction.

“ What is the day of the month, Miss Fitzallan ?” asked Mr. Ormington, as they all sat

together on the last morning of the allotted time. Somehow he generally preferred addressing himself to her, which the generous young Earl had observed with pleasure.

"The twenty-fourth."

"A week to-morrow then since Lord Dunorven went to the Davies'."

"Yes," said Amy, wondering what made him date from thence. There was one present who knew well enough.

"How fast the time flies!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte.

"It has been a very slow week to me," replied her sister, simply.

"What says the Countess?" asked her tormentor.

"Nothing until it be past," was the haughty reply. "Time is reckoned by incidents, not by hours!"

It was the old man's turn to tremble now, and yet he knew not why. But as we have

said, he was much changed of late, and growing sadly feeble.

"Has he gone there again?" asked Lady Charlotte.

"No, only for a drive," replied his mother, "he will be back soon; but I fancied he was not looking very well, and the air would do him good."

"Yes, he has been very pale of late," said Miss St. Aubyn. "But I hope he will not go too far to tire himself."

"He will be better soon," observed Mr. Ormington, in his cold, mocking tones.

"Oh! I trust so!"

Poor Clara! The Countess turned away her head, and a tear dimmed the brightness of her skilful embroidery. But at this moment the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a servant with a letter and parcel for Miss Fitzallan, which the messenger who brought it had made him promise to deliver into her own hands.

"Is any one waiting?" asked Amy.

"No, Miss, the boy went away directly."

"What writing!" exclaimed Lady Charlotte laughingly.

"And what spelling too! But I will not have you make game of my correspondent." But presently the girl's whole manner changed, as she managed with difficulty to make out the brief but rude epistle, and a burst of joy escaped from her quivering lips. A joy in which, thinking that all must participate, she naturally expressed aloud. "It is from Betty Harper," continued she, "the woman who was with poor mamma when she died. And the very same to whom Mrs. Jelf sent me lately with wine and medicines, when she lay sick of the fever. And though I had a dim recollection of her features, I could not then remember where it was we had met before. But she recognised me at once, she says, as one whom she had deeply injured, although I knew it not. It was she it seems who abstracted all the valu-

ables from the casket which was afterwards found filled up with stones. And dear mamma was no cheat—no imposter after all!”

“No one ever thought she was but that odious Mrs. Hopkins!” said Lady Charlotte soothingly, as she passed her arm affectionately around her waist. “And so her conscience pricked her, and she has sent them all back I suppose? Well I am glad for your sake!”

Mr. Ormington sat upright in his chair, and his face was white and colourless; but no one thought of noticing him. Even the proud Countess bent eagerly forward to hear what was going on. While Lady Anne woke up all of a sudden, and as her brother would have said, began to look alive! And Clara St. Aubyn’s face was full of affectionate sympathy.

“The woman,” continued Amy, “begs so earnestly for forgiveness, that one must have a heart of stone to refuse it—And yet she was unkind to poor mamma!—But she has suffered much herself it seems since then, and is even

now, but in feeble and declining health. I know what Mr. Alleyne would say, as he always does—‘vengeance is the Lord’s!’—And so let it be.”

Mr. Ormington felt conscience-stricken, and bowed down his head upon his hands; while the eager glance of the Countess became once again full of hope. A vain hope! for the feeling, like most of our best and noblest, was but a transitory one and passed rapidly away.

“Do open the box?” petitioned the curious Lady Charlotte, as Amy still sat with the letter in her hand, on which her tears were dropping fast and silently, for it had brought back the past as vividly as though it were but yesterday.

“Best not—at least not now!” exclaimed the old man in an eager, though faltering voice. But no one heeded him, and he seemed for a moment to lack strength and energy to repeat the request.

Even the white fingers of the Countess her-

self, assisted in wrenching out the rude nails with which the box was fastened down, and the lid being withdrawn, Amy drew out a chain of massive gold, which she flung by as though it had been but little worth; until remembering whose neck it had once pressed, she took it up again and kissed it fondly and reverently. After all, the most precious ornaments are valuable chiefly as relics. And we have known under some circumstances, a hair ring prized far above one of diamonds.

Next lay a locket containing the picture of a young and strikingly handsome, although somewhat voluptuous and dissipated looking man in regimentals; simply inscribed as the gift of Captain Fitzallan to his wife upon her birthday.

"Then my father was a Captain," said Amy, clasping her hands wildly together. "And how beautiful!—But I fear—Oh! I fear he was not kind—But I was so young then, how should I know anything about it?"

"Amy," said Mr. Ormington, calling her by her christian name for the first time. "Seek no further—I advise you—I warn—I command you—for the sake of your own happiness hereafter!"

"Command," repeated the girl, with a flushed cheek. "And by what right?"

"No matter—only be ruled by me."

"It is in vain you urge me thus!" said Amy in an excited tone. "I must and will know all!—All at least that these jewels can reveal."

"Ah! there may be nothing else—It is natural for girls to love such sparkling things.—But what say you—will you sell me the remainder for a thousand pounds?"

"Not for all your wealth!" replied the girl, with flashing eyes.

"Nay, I did but jest."

"Forgive me," said Amy more gently, but I am in no humour for such mockery just now. I am sorry if I spoke rudely and impatiently, believing you in earnest from your manner,

although that could not well be either, for what good would they be to you? While to me they are more valuable than all else in the world,—being hers!”

The old man turned away without a word. Was it a jest? The Countess thought not; and again her eager gaze was bent upon Amy, as she drew forth her treasures one by one, consisting for the most part, of sundry articles of jewelry, some of which were of no mean value, although others seemed to have been cherished rather as *souvenirs* of the past, although no mark remained to tell why they had been thus hoarded up with so much care. Mr. Ormington's brow cleared, and his keen eyes gleamed with malicious triumph; but his exultation was but momentary, for just then the girl discovered a folded paper, laying like hope at the bottom of Pandora's box.

“It is the certificate of my dear mamma's marriage!” exclaimed she. “And good Heavens! can it be possible? Her maiden name

was Ormington ; You, then, are my long lost grandfather !” And she knelt down at the old man’s feet, and tried to take one of the cold and withered hands which were so passionately withdrawn from her grasp, while the Countess sank back fainting on her seat, and was assisted from the room, followed by the whole party, as much out of anxiety for her, as an idea that it would be best to leave the newly found relatives together for the present.

“ Speak to me !” said poor Amy, pained by the strange silence. “ Grandfather !—dear grandfather !—will you not own me even yet ?”

“ Not if I could have helped it ; but you have forced me into doing so. Did I not command you to seek no further, while you dared to question my right to do so ?”

“ Pardon me, but I knew you not. Oh ! how was I to guess it ? And why, oh ! why may I not love you ?”

“ Love me—pshaw ! you hate and fear me. I have heard it from your own lips.”

"Then it was wrong in me to say so, and I meant it not; for indeed I think I could if you would let me!"

"You think."

"Nay, I am sure of it! for she loved you, too, my dear, dear mamma! and bade me do the same with her dying breath."

"And yet it was I, at least you said so once, who killed her by that cruel letter!"

"No, Betty Harper had been agitating and annoying her before it came, and she was very feeble and could not have lived much longer. But I do not remember ever telling you about these things."

"Nevertheless, I had it from your own lips. Amy, I never loved your mother or she me, if I had, I should not have urged her on as I sometimes think I did by my harshness, neither would she have deserted me for the arms of a villain! I was sorry when I heard of her death, and thought, perhaps, it was a vain dream, that as you were but a child you would

learn to be grateful at least, if not in time to love me, who had no one else in the world to care for. And so I sought you out."

"Well," said Amy breathlessly, observing that he paused.

"Well, I came, as I have said, to take you to my heart and home ; but being tired, or willing to lengthen out the time, and watch first if you were like her, sat down beneath the Rectory windows to rest and listen awhile to what you were saying, one word of which I have never forgotten from that hour !"

"Oh ! what could it have been about ?"

"Myself, principally ; you spoke of me in terms of fear and abhorrence, cursing me in your childish way as the destroyer of your mother ! and I went forth again and left you to your fate !"

"But you have forgiven me since then grandfather ?"

"It would seem so, for I have once again returned after a weary lapse of years to gra-

tify a childish wish which you then expressed."

"Ah! how kind!" said Amy, kissing the hand which, although he had suffered her to retain, returned not her gentle pressure, and never once noticing the sneer upon his thin and scornful lip. "But what did I wish?"

"To be heiress of Castle Coombe; have you forgotten?"

"No indeed; but it was very silly of me."

"And is this your gratitude?"

"I am no longer ambitious grandfather," replied the girl, trying to speak gaily, while she shrank from the expression of his countenance.

"Since when, Amy?"

"Since I have learned that it is far better to be loved than great!" replied his companion, while she tossed back the hair from her open brow, and raised her calm, frank gaze to his.

"But if the two can be united—if you can be both loved and great?"

"Still there may be a difficulty—we may not love ourselves."

"Your mother's marriage was one of affection," said Mr. Ormington, in his cold, measured tones, "and yet she died a neglected, deserted, and broken hearted wife!"

"But yours was not—you told me so once, and therefore, you were never happy. The only one you ever loved or cared for married another, leaving you lonely and without hope!"

"Save of revenge, which you have more than half destroyed; but you have a good memory."

"Pardon me, if I have given you pain," said Amy meekly.

"No, no, there is no harm done; I am used to it by this time. But you have not asked me who it was that scorned me thus."

"I dared not."

"Nevertheless, it need be no secret now. It was the Countess of Castle Coombe!"

“ And yet you would have me marry her son ?”

“ I would have done so to vex and humble her haughty pride ; and now you shall do it for Dunorven’s sake, the only one who has ever been kind and thoughtful, and never taunted or ridiculed me for a moment.” And a subdued expression passed over the old man’s face as he spoke.

“ It is impossible !” said Amy firmly ; “ I am betrothed to another, and you know it. He sent me the letter that you wrote. Oh ! grandfather, how very nearly you had made us both miserable ! But all that is past now.”

“ I was mistaken in him,” observed Mr. Ormington coldly, “ had his affection been as noble and self sacrificing as I gave him credit for, he would not have stood thus in the way of your elevation.”

“ As if that ever brought happiness, or I could be happy without him ? No, he knew

better than that, judging of me by his own heart."

The old man turned away baffled for the moment by her calm, self controul and innocent trust. He had thought that one habitually so gentle would have been more easily wielded to his purpose ; but Amy, although her heart yearned towards her only living relative, loved him not as yet sufficiently well for him to have any power over her, for thus only are spirits such as hers to be swayed.

" But why did this haughty Countess refuse you ?" asked the girl at length, in a tone so soft, that even her stern companion did not seem to resent the question, but answered it as though mechanically.

" I was at that time a widower, and older than her by many years, but rich, nevertheless, and therefore she encouraged and lured me on, until one came who seemed a still more eligible match, for in addition to his youth, he had a

coronet to offer to her acceptance ; and then she turned, and mocked at the hopes she herself had raised ?”

“ Oh ! that was wrong indeed !”

“ Well, I left her, cursing her for her perfidy ; and the curse was worked out at length. Nearly four and twenty years afterwards, by a singular turn of good fortune, or rather by the wonder-working hand of a strange and uncontrollable destiny, this deed became mine, making me heir of Castle Coombe, with all its broad lands and territories. But I am an old man and cannot live long ; so it shall be yours if you obey me !”

“ And poor Lord Dunorven ?” asked the wondering Amy, in a compassionate tone.

“ Ah ! you pity him then. Well, it is easy to give him back his own.”

“ And may I, dear grandfather ?”

“ Would you, Amy ?”

“ Willingly ! joyfully !”

“ It is well ; I have meant it should be so

all along. It is your marriage portion, and becomes his upon your wedding day !”

“ Oh ! not so. Let it be a free gift.”

“ And are you vain enough to think this little hand of more worth than an estate which princes might envy ?”

“ Yes, to him on whom I mean to bestow it.”

“ Amy,” said the old man passionately, “ you dare not bestow it without my consent ! Already, by your rashness, have you destroyed my well devised plan of vengeance. Even believing you to be have been an unknown and penniless orphan, the offspring of shame, perhaps, of vice, her pride would have given way ; it must, and you would have been his bride, although her wrung and stubborn heart broke ! rather than divulge to the world, and more than all to Dunorven, the ruin which hung over his house. Now that you are my acknowledged grandchild, and your father, cold-hearted villain as he was, yet bearing a

name men call honorable, an ancestry which she dare not scorn, that consent will be given more readily. But daily and hourly shall she yet be made to feel my power; and Dunorven still be free and happy, for you know that he loves you, he has told you so himself, and when there could be no suspicion of his disinterestedness."

"But that was long ago—he may have forgotten it, or if not it is equally in vain, for I will wed none other than Cecil Grey!" And the young girl arose up from her knees, and stood proud and erect before him, with her eyes flashing, and her cheeks crimson from excitement.

For a moment Mr. Ormington regarded her with a look of blended triumph and admiration; while he chuckled within himself at the idea of his grandchild thus refusing the Earl of Castle Coombe! And scorning her son even as the proud mother had, years before, scorned and rejected him: but the cold sneer returned presently to his lip and brow.

"Nay, you shall tell her so yourself," said he, "and she shall plead for that which I have the power to command, ay, and plead long, even as I did to her—But mark me—in the end you yield!"

"Never!" answered Amy.

"Then I disown—I cast you off as a nameless beggar! See how your generous lover will receive you then."

"Was I not all this when he wooed me, grandfather? But not quite a beggar either, thanks to your kindness," added she, with a touch of feeling which met with no answering sympathy from her stony-hearted companion.

"It was well I was wise enough to send no more, since it would have only served to make you more independent of me."

"It is your neglect which has done that," said Amy. "Cecil stood my friend and protector when I had no other in the world! But for him, and the venerable benefactor whom he

won for me, I might have been starved, or beaten to death, or sent perhaps, at last to the parish workhouse, and grown up in vice and ignorance. He loved—and cheered—and taught me all I know of those elegant accomplishments befitting my birth, and proper station in society. And now when the time is coming to repay all this early kindness by the devotion of my life—by refusing for his sake, wealth, honour, and titles, think you that I will not avail myself of it? ”

“Your mother married thus,” said the old man coldly. “And what was her fate?”

“But then it is different, he was not worthy of her. Whereas Cecil, is too good—too noble for me.”

“Too noble, why he is but a lawyer after all—And Dunorven is an Earl in his own right.”

“I would not have him even if he were a king!” replied the dauntless Amy. “But was speaking of mind rather than rank—And yet Dunorven has been very kind to me.”

“Well, well, we will not argue the point now,” said Mr. Ormington, while his whole frame shook, and his keen grey eyes glittered strangely. “You may repeat all these objections before the Countess, and let us see how she takes them—But by the Heaven that is above us, you shall do my will at last!”

Amy forbore in pity to agitate him by any farther opposition, but her resolution remained unaltered; and gathering up her treasures in haste, she withdrew to meditate on the startling events of the last few hours. Truly had the Countess predicted that much might come to pass before that week was up.

CHAPTER IX.

THE Countess soon recovered from her swoon, and leaving her, at her own request, to try and rest for a little while, the three girls retired to the recess of the deep oriel window, to talk over the strange events of the morning.

“To think of Mr. Ormington’s being her grandfather, after all !” said Lady Charlotte, “no wonder she should have always had an instinctive dread of this unknown relative ;

but he must have been aware of the relationship all along, for he could not have failed to recognise the name, and Dunorven told him her whole history. He could not have had much love for her."

"But he is very rich," said Lady Anne, "and very old, so Miss Fitzallan must bear with him for the present for her own sake."

"She will endeavour to do so for his," observed the less worldly Miss St. Aubyn, "and I do think the old man likes her as much as it is in his nature to like any one."

"At any rate I am glad she is to keep her pretty name," continued Lady Charlotte, "for as I used often to tell Dunorven, just to vex him, who knows but what she might turn out to be a Smith, or a Jones, or a Dobbs! at which he always grew quite angry, that is as angry as my dear, good natured brother can; and bid me look in her face to see if this was at all likely."

"But, perhaps, she may not keep her pretty

name, as you call it," suggested Miss St. Aubyn, with a bright smile.

"True," said Lady Anne, "for the rich Mr. Ormington's grandchild, and acknowledged heiress, will of course be quite a different sort of person from the poor, unknown Amy Fitzallan."

"Ah! she would not change it for any one who could think thus," replied her sister indignantly. "And her kind, cheerful temper, and rare beauty, make her a fortune in herself! I have heard Dunorven say so a thousand times."

"Why you do nothing but quote Dunorven, Charlotte."

"Because he is always talking about her."

"Yes how glad he will be," said Miss St. Aubyn, "when he hears of this. And how surprised too."

"How lucky it was for Amy," added Lady Charlotte, "that that wicked woman should send back the jewels, after keeping them so

many years. Or perhaps, Mr. Ormington, who is proverbially strange and eccentric, might have taken it into his head to die at last without acknowledging her."

"I do not think that 'lucky' is the right term to use in speaking of all this," said Miss St. Aubyn, gently. "It seems to me to be one of those well ordered dispensations of Providence, the beauty and minuteness of which we fail to discover until the glorious whole, that we have helped, perhaps, ourselves to work out, is manifested at length before our eyes. Mrs. Jelf, in sending Amy with the wine and medicines to the sick woman, was one of the many agents employed by a higher power to bring about this *dénouement*. Her own kind voice and manner another, awakening as it could scarcely fail to do the troubled conscience of the invalid to a sense of its own guilt, and a yearning in some measure to atone for it. Then the old man's visit, even against the wishes of your dear mamma! His prolonged

stay, which we all grumbled at, at the time;—all these were but links in the tangled chain of events. And this same kind, and wisely directing Providence is over us all, so that nothing happens, however grievous and hardly to be borne it may seem at the time, that is not eventually for our good and happiness.”

“If all had your faith, dear Clara! there would be fewer grumblers in the world,” said Lady Charlotte, passing her arm affectionately around the waist of her friend.

“Ah! but this is only my belief, we cannot all act up to our own high standard. I too, weep with the rest when sorrow comes, even knowing as I do that it is from Heaven; but not as one without hope. And I cannot but think that grief at such times is natural to us all, and forgiven by Him, who also wept.”

“Hush!” interrupted Lady Anne. “I fear we are talking too loud, and disturbing dear mamma!”

"No," said the Countess, "not disturbing me, for I cannot rest. But go with your sister, Miss Fitzallan may want you by this time, and Clara will remain and take care of me."

"Oh, yes! and I will engage to be so quiet."

"But I want to talk to you—I want you to talk to me. That was a beautiful faith of which you spoke. I heard it many years ago when I was a child, but not since. And you believe in it? You believe all trouble to be of God's appointing, and for our good?"

"There is no doubt of that. But the worst of it is we cannot always think so at the right time. The conviction never fails however to come home to us at last, bringing with it its own comfort."

"Such a creed," said the Countess musingly, "seems calculated to rob misfortunes of half their bitterness. And yet, how can sorrow and disappointment ever be for our good?"

"If in no other way, by bringing us nearer Him," replied her companion meekly.

"That is they make us wish for death?"

"Or at least cease to fear it."

The Countess buried her face in the silken pillows of the couch, and relapsed into silence.

"Clara," exclaimed she, looking up at length, "you have been here a long time now."

"Yes, so my guardian was telling me yesterday, when he wrote. And yet it seems such a little while!"

"Did he urge your return?"

"No, he was only glad to hear that I was so well and happy. But why do you ask this? Are you tired of me?" And the girl looked up with a bright smile which faded before the pallid agony of that wan and colorless face.

"You know that I would have you always with me, if it were possible—but—"

"But what, dear friend?"

"Forgive me, my child, but it is best you should leave us for a little time."

"Only for a little time?"

The Countess averted her head from that eager glance.

"Yes, it must be best if you think so, and at any rate we shall be sure to meet in a few months," added she, striving to hide her own sorrow and disappointment, rather than add to the deep and evident affliction of her companion, "and yet they will seem years to me! And even if you should decide upon not having Lady Anne presented this season, I may come back to you—may I not?"

"If you wish it, Clara."

"Oh! you think I shall be so gay just then. But indeed, indeed, I would much rather be here with you all! Have you told Lord Dunorven that you mean to send me away?"

"No, not yet."

"I think he will miss me. But no doubt it is best."



“ Much best, dear child ! and it is for your own sake alone that I consent to part with you.”

“ And are all these tears for me ?” asked Miss St. Aubyn, kissing them fondly away. “ This must not be, I am not worthy of them. You shall see how bravely I will bear this separation ; no you will not see, but I will make my guardian write and tell you how well and lively I am. After all, it is only for a little while, and it might seem strange my staying here so long,” added the girl with a crimson blush, “ just as if I was one of the family.”

Poor Clara ! perhaps she more than half expected her companion would have said, what her own too sanguine heart had already whispered, “ and you will be, one of these days.” Instead of which she only shuddered, as if with a sudden chill, although it was a bright, sunny day as could well be, and the girl feared that she must be very ill indeed.

"How soon can you go?" asked the Countess at length, in a somewhat abrupt tone.

"Oh! let me see, it is too late to write by to-day's post, but if I send off a letter to-morrow my guardian will come for me any time after that which I may appoint."

"You have a good hour to spare," said her companion, looking at her watch. "And the boy might have the horse ready to gallop over with it to the post office, directly you have finished."

"Oh! not to-day!" petitioned poor Clara. "Surely there is no such very great hurry. I was about to ask you to give me one more week, and then I will promise to obey you without a murmur."

"It may be too late then," observed her companion.

"Too late for what, dear friend?"

"No matter, you shall have this week." For the Countess recollected at that moment how a

similar period had been granted to her, and how much had come to pass therein. "And it may be," thought she, with more of superstition than religion, "that a higher power dictated the request."

"That is kind indeed."

"Perhaps not," replied her companion sadly.

"Oh! yes, and I am so grateful for it."

"My poor child!" exclaimed the Countess fondly, as she kissed her cheek. "But go away now and tell the girls, they will be sorry to lose you, and yet it must be."

"Why must it be?" thought Clara, without daring to give utterance to the question. "And yet in her love for me she is doubtless acting for the best, and our separation will not be for long."

The Countess watched her with tearful eyes as she glided noiselessly away. "After all," murmured she, "one sacrifice is required, and it must need be this young and gentle girl.

And even did she know it, I cannot but think it would be cheerfully made for Dunorven's sake. Her own sweet faith and trust will bring her comfort. Blessed are they who have this rock on which to lean!"

The secret of Amy's real birth, a secret no longer, now travelled like the wind; and Mrs. Jelf came up into her room, with a brighter smile than that generally immoveable countenance had worn for many a long month, to congratulate her upon the discovery.

"And you will be a real lady after all, Miss Amy," said she, "as we predicted from the very first. How pleased Mr. Grey will be when he hears of it!"

"I do not exactly know that," replied Amy inadvertently. "That is I do not believe he will care two straws about it. And how delightful to be loved for oneself alone!"

"But then who could help loving you?"

"Not you, dear Jelfy! most certainly," said

the happy girl flinging her arms caressingly around her neck; while the worthy house-keeper forgot her anger, and her clean collar both at once, and actually wept tears of joy with her young favorite. For all poor Amy's troubles had vanished from her mind, leaving that sort of happy and joyous feeling which was never long absent there.

"I wish you would let Martha come up to me for a few moments," said Amy, as Mrs. Jelf arose at length to go. "She was so kind to me after poor dear mamma died, and will be quite pleased to look at my treasures; and still more at my thinking of her."

"Yes, to be sure she shall; I assure you that I think very highly of Martha, and have had it in my head for some time past, to raise her to a situation in the Countess's establishment, more befitting her unwearied skill and industry. And you can tell her this if you like—if it will be any gratification to you to do so."

" Oh, yes! I shall like it certainly, and so will she too. You are always thinking of something to give me pleasure I do believe."

" But then it is so easily done."

Ah! therein lay the spell, it is so easy to please some people; so difficult, nay almost impossible even to satisfy others. And we naturally take a pleasure in doing the one most agreeable to ourselves, that is the one that may be achieved with the least individual trouble, and yet bring forth the brightest results. And then again, there are one or two in the world whom we feel sure to please do what we will—and how we love them in consequence!

Amy was amply repaid for her thoughtfulness, in witnessing the wonder and delight of the simple Martha, as she opened her large round eyes to their fullest extent, at the sight of that glittering casket.

" And these are all really yours, Miss Amy?"

"Yes, my very own."

"To think of that wicked woman daring to rob the dead and the orphan! No wonder nothing ever prospered with her afterwards."

"But it may now that she has repented and made all the restitution in her power. She says that everything is here which she took away, but a few coins that she sold for old gold, being very poor at the time. And I mean to ask my grandfather to give me some money to send her."

"And do you think he will, Miss?"

"Ah! well thought of," said the girl more gravely, "at any rate he will not refuse to lend it to me until such time as I can get Mr. Alleyne to send to the bank for mine. For I should like to answer her as soon as possible, since she is ill and suffering; and look at this little bead purse, Martha, no doubt the work of my dear mamma's own hands, for there are several things here made by her. Well, I

mean to give it to you with something bright and shining at the bottom, when I get it, in remembrance of your care and kindness to her orphan child; and you must keep it for both our sakes."

"Well to be sure! who would have thought that this day would ever come?" exclaimed the simple-hearted domestic, as the tears coursed each other down her rough cheeks. "But I cannot remember that I did any thing to deserve this."

"Oh yes! indeed Martha, for a kind word was more than gold to me then; but go away now, and see that this letter is forwarded to the rectory as soon as possible," and Amy hurried her off to escape her thanks and blessings, sweetly as they fell upon her own heart.

What happiness it would have been to have sat down and told all to Cecil. How it had come to pass even as she had dreamt years ago,

and she had been called upon to sacrifice wealth, honour, and rank for his sake. For the young glory in these things ; while even the most generous actions of those advanced in years are dimmed by a cautiousness, lest after all it may not turn out exactly right in the end. But she knew that he must be very busy just then, and how necessary it was that his mind should be kept clear and unoccupied ; and in spite of all her protestations of affection, such was Cecil's nature, that he would still have worried himself with a thousand doubts, so that she resolved to say nothing to him about it, at least at present ; and none but those who have some dear friend to whom they love to tell every secret of their inmost hearts, and fly to in times of joy or trouble for sympathy and assistance, can comprehend the whole extent of Amy's heroic self-sacrifice ; yes it is quite possible to be a heroine, and to make sacrifices upon occasions which to others may appear trivial and common-place enough.

Amy never doubted for a moment but what her grandfather would eventually restore the estates of Castle Coombe to their rightful owner, knowing his affection for Dunorven, and hoped that it would be so ; and although anticipating much opposition at first, felt almost sure that in the end he would yield his consent to her marriage with Cecil, when he saw how firm she was in her rejection of the Earl, and how much her future happiness depended upon it. Besides perhaps giving them a sum sufficient to lighten many of the difficulties in her lover's early career. For young and inexperienced as she was, she knew that fortunes are not to be made in a day, even with the assistance of all the talent and eloquence in the world, and thought it but natural that a portion of the old man's riches should be bestowed upon his grandchild.

"If not," thought she, "neither Cecil or Mr. Alleyne will love me any the less, and so

that we are together I do not shrink from poverty or hardship."

The young Earl, on his return from his ride, seeing the door open, just peeped into his mother's boudoir as he passed; and sitting upright on the couch she beckoned him in.

"A plague take these noisy boots of mine for disturbing you; but I am not fit to tread over your dainty carpets in them, having been riding hard."

"Dunorven," exclaimed the Countess, "how often have I warned you—how often have you promised me not to do that?"

"Nay, forgive me, dear mother."

"You are but just come in you say—then you have not heard the news?"

"No, what news?"

"That which concerns one whom you love."

"Is Trevallion come then?"

"No, you must guess again."

"Then some one has proposed for Charlotte."

"Your head seems full of marriages, Dunorven."

"I am wrong again I suppose. Perhaps it concerns Clara St. Aubyn?"

"Why you do not love her?"

"Indeed I do, and more than I ever thought I should once."

"She is going away," said the Countess, watching eagerly for his reply. "What if poor Clara should not have been too sanguine after all? What if he did indeed love her as she had dreamed?"

"Nay, I am sorry for that," replied the young Earl carelessly, "but she has been here a long time too. I wonder how Mr. Graham, her guardian, manages to do without her."

His mother sank back on the couch with a sigh.

“ Well, but this news. It must be about Miss Fitzallan then?—nay I am sure it is,” and it was Dunorven’s turn to look anxious now, and hang breathlessly forward to await the lingering reply.

“ Yes, she has discovered her grandfather at last, in the person of Mr. Ormington, with whose family history you cannot be unacquainted, although I had never the remotest suspicion of the relationship existing between them, or the girl herself until this morning. But he was always a strange, eccentric being.”

“ Mother,” said Dunorven, and his voice faltered as he spoke, “ you do not ask me if I love Amy Fitzallan.”

“ The question is not needed I fear.”

“ You fear—oh ! do you still withhold your consent when the very objection which you urged against her must be now removed ?”

“ Not if it will make you happy, Dunorven,”

and then, as she glanced upon his radiant brow, and felt his passionate kisses upon her cheek and lips, the mother's pride melted away before her deep affection, and ere they parted she had promised to learn, for his sake, to love Amy as a daughter.

CHAPTER X.

MR. ORMINGTON did not again make his appearance among the family upon that day, but confining himself to his own apartment sent for Amy to make tea for him ; and when the girl came in for a few moments after he had retired they could observe that her face was pale, and her eyes swollen with weeping.

“ Do not mind that cross old curmudgeon,

though he is your grandfather," whispered Lady Charlotte soothingly. "Has he been scolding you very much?"

"No, not scolding—but I cannot tell you any thing to-night, for my head aches terribly."

The congratulations of the Countess were kindly spoken, as she drew Amy towards her and pressed her cold lips upon those throbbing temples, Dunorven standing by and looking on the while, as happy as a prince, although he half wondered to see the shuddering fear with which the girl seemed to shrink back from the proffered caress.

"You are not well I fear, my dear Miss Fitzallan?" said he anxiously.

"Not very."

"She has the headache and must not be teased," observed Lady Charlotte. While Clara St. Aubyn, more thoughtful in her affection, although we much question whether the

young Earl thanked her in his heart for such prudence, proposed Amy's retiring immediately to rest, and even accompanied her to her own apartment.

Why had she so loved her, even from the very beginning? Was it because Dunorven did? We think it must have been so, it seems very natural. For ourselves we always keep a warm corner in our hearts for the beloved of our dearest friends.

Miss St. Aubyn would not leave her until she might carry away the light lest it should prevent her sleeping, or tempt her into writing or reading, instead of seeking the rest which she so much needed; and then, when she would have departed with a kind kiss, and a whispered good night, Amy suddenly flung her arms around her neck as she bent over her, drawing down her face towards her own, and said in a low voice.

“ One question, dear Clara, and forgiveness

for venturing to utter it. You love Dunorven. Nay, there is no shame in owning it for he is worthy of you."

"Oh, too good—too good for me."

"That is impossible, but I am quite satisfied now. Good night, dear friend, and hope every thing."

The following morning within an hour of the expiration of the week he had given her, the Countess of Castle Coombe stood with her usual proud and haughty bearing before the door of Mr. Ormington's sitting-room, into which few cared to intrude since he had made it his own, and knocked gently for admission.

"Come in," said the old man, without rising from his chair. "I admire punctuality above all things."

Amy arose up hastily from her knees before him, and upon his bidding her somewhat harshly remain where she was, retired to the further end of the apartment, and bowing down

her head upon her hands continued to weep convulsively.

"You need not fear speaking before her," said Mr. Ormington, observing that his visiter paused, "for she knows all, even from the very beginning. You have decided I suppose?"

"I have, and in the union of our children am willing to bury all that is past in eternal oblivion. Let us be friends."

"With all my heart," said the old man, and yet that white hand so frankly extended was untaken, he could not have touched it for the world. "You hear us, Miss Fitzallan?"

The girl shuddered but answered not.

"She does not look much like a bride, the bride of the proud Earl of Castle Coombe," continued Mr. Ormington directing the attention of the Countess to his weeping grandchild.

"Poor girl, she is timid. This has been a great change for her."

“Not exactly that, but I fancy she has no mind for a wedding just yet. Perhaps she thinks you may still hesitate to receive her into your family.”

“Nay, that is foolish, my dear Miss Fitzallan!” said the Countess, passing her arm around the trembling form of the still sobbing Amy, while the old man’s eyes actually glittered with malicious triumph. “You know it is different now, and as Mr. Ormington’s acknowledged grandchild—as his heiress, you must be a fitting match even for Dunorven. Forgive me that I once thought otherwise.”

“What still silent girl! Have you no words in which to thank her ladyship for her condescension? In which to pour forth your gratitude for her tardy sanction to the addresses of your noble lover?”

“Oh, grandfather, spare me! spare us both,” exclaimed poor Amy, in an excited tone. “I have told you before, and I repeat it again—I never will marry Lord Dunorven!”

"You hear her, Henriette, and that it is from no fault of mine if our treaty becomes void."

"Nay, she must be mad to speak thus. What, Amy Fitzallan refuse the Earl of Castle Coombe?"

"Aye, it does seem marvellous. And for the second time—is it not so child?"

The girl averted her pale face and answered not.

"With her hand alone," continued the old man vehemently, "shall the lands of Castle Coombe be restored to their rightful heir, I have sworn it, and his fate therefore rests with her. Nevertheless if she persists in her disobedience the punishment must fall equally upon both, for both will be beggars, and I would sooner leave my wealth to build hospitals and alms houses, as most bad men do, thinking thus to propitiate heaven, than

either should be one shilling the richer for it."

"Grandfather," said Amy clinging to him, "I do not want your money—indeed—indeed I do not!—I that have been so happy hitherto without it. Only give him the estate, and let who will have the rest."

"And you remain still a dependant on his mother's bounty?"

"No indeed, if you would but suffer me to stay and nurse, and take care of you, as it is my duty—but not for your gold, grandfather—only in the hope of winning your love—of making you happier; then there is still a home always ready for me at the rectory; and bye and bye one of my own which queens might envy me!" and the girl tossed back the hair from her brow with an eager, hopeful look, which was clouded again by one glance at the stony countenance of him to whom she pleaded thus earnestly.

"Amy," said he, "I am not given to yield up my will for a few tears and prayers; what I have said I will abide by. Realise your dream of love in a cottage if you will, but remember that you condemn Dunorven to the same obscurity, and not only him, but the sisters whom you profess to love."

"Oh! no, no, it cannot be," replied the half distracted girl, turning appealingly to the Countess. "Lady Anne will marry Mr. Trevallion—and—"

"Not with the slightest shadow of disgrace upon her name," interrupted Mr. Ormington. "Have you so soon forgotten his own words?"

"If he loved her they were but words."

"Pshaw! man's love is not like that of a silly and romantic girl. It demands sacrifices, but makes none. He would cast her off with scorn—and she—but it is an old and foolish tale, to think one ever really dies of a broken heart."

I do believe it makes them live all the longer, a curse to themselves and every one about them !”

“ But Dunorven at least would not be left wholly destitute,” said Amy, clinging in her despair to a thousand wild, vain hopes, “ he would marry Miss St. Aubyn, who has wealth enough for both.”

“ He will marry Amy Fitzallan and no one else !” exclaimed the old man. “ I had it this very morning from his own lips. And such devotion surely deserves some better reward.”

“ But I told him months ago I could not love him.”

Mr. Ormington looked at the Countess, as a proud, angry flush passed over her high white brow.

“ Well, you shall recal those words.”

“ Never ! never !” exclaimed the girl passionately.

“ And you would sacrifice one who loves you so much, so disinterestedly—the family to whom some little gratitude is surely due—the grandfather who has a right to your obedience—for a man who may, perhaps, have forgotten all about you long before this?”

“ Oh ! no, why it was but this very morning that he wrote to me,” said Amy, simply.

“ I dare not ask to see the letter, I suppose?”

The girl hesitated a moment before she put it into his hands, but it was only a moment. And then how eagerly did she watch his half averted face as he perused it. And the Countess too, the latter trembling more than once, at that which made Amy very glad and hopeful.

“ It is well written,” said Mr. Ormington coldly, as he returned it at length. “ This Mr. Grey has evidently a good command of language, and will no doubt make a wonder-

fully eloquent and distinguished barrister; that is if he does not marry too early in life, and suffer himself to be dragged downwards, by the rapidly increasing cares of a wife and family; for many a career promising at its commencement to be equally brilliant has been ruined thus. He is very sanguine too, it would seem, but it is the common fault of youth, who think a house is to be rented, furnished, and kept with as much ease as they build up their castles in the air. A few thousands would be more beneficial than even this little hand at present, Amy."

"But what if you were to be generous, dear grandfather, and give him both? And then, letting Dunorven enjoy his own estate, come and spend all the rest of your days with us. We should be so happy together!"

"And could you really bear with all my ill temper?"

"Oh, yes! You should be just as cross as

ever you liked. And we in our gratitude would think your frowns were smiles, and so never resent, or even heed them, unless we could win you at length to laugh in right good earnest."

"Said I not you were a skilful architect at raising these ariel fabrics?"

"But why need they be ariel?"

"Because it is my will! Ah! now you tremble again. Henriette, can you urge nothing to change the obstinate determination of this wayward girl, who has thus baffled all our schemes? Have you no claims to put forward upon her love and gratitude for past kindnesses?"

"Of what avail would it be," replied the Countess despairingly, "if even Dunorven has pleaded in vain."

"Oh! forgive me!" exclaimed Amy. "And advise me how to act—what to do!"

"Obey him, there is no other hope left."

"She counsels well, and from experience," said the old man with a withering sneer.

"But in vain. I will not break my faith with Cecil Grey!" And something of his own spirit kindled in the bright, flashing eyes of his grandchild.

"Leave us," said Mr. Ormington, turning towards the Countess, who obeyed him as though mechanically, and retired with a despairing glance towards the girl, who thus by a strange chance, held not only her own fate but that of all she loved, in her power. While Amy resuming her former position, knelt again at his feet, covering his withered hands with her tears and kisses, nor did he attempt to withdraw them from her grasp.

"Amy," said he, "I am an old man, and have only you in the whole world; for why should I trouble myself about her son—the son of the woman who scorned and mocked at me?

Can you really love me as you talked of just now?"

"Oh! yes, indeed, when you look so kindly at me."

"And this Cecil Grey—dare you answer for him also?"

"You would not ask if you knew him better. He will be sure to like you; first for my sake, and afterwards for your own, and you must do the same by him. I will be the link of sympathy until you both learn to do without me. May I, dear grandfather?" And she laid her bright cheek lovingly against his, and kissed that stern brow, which no other lip had pressed for so many long and weary years. While her fond caresses seemed to unlock the well-spring of human love and kindness, long pent up and frozen within his breast.

"This letter requires answering, does it not?" said the old man at length. "May I

answer it for you, Amy? And you shall add a postscript."

"Oh, yes! He will be so glad—so surprised! He will be sure to recognise the hand writing at once, and so open it perhaps, thinking to find the contents very different."

"And how do you know what I may chose to write?"

"Something kind by that glance. Oh, how foolish of me ever to dread—ever to fear you!"

"And will you promise never to do so again, Amy?"

"Willingly; and if I should break my word it will be all your own fault, mind that."

"And now fetch me my desk, I must write directly, and then I will rest a little, for I feel strangely tired!"

"Rest first, dear grandfather!"

"No, no, my desk I say," and the old man

wrote hurriedly, in a trembling and almost illegible hand. And when he had finished gave her the paper to read. It merely contained his full consent to Cecil's marriage with his grandchild, together with a request that he would start for Castle Coombe immediately upon its reception. Thanking him for all his care and kindness to that treasure, the value of which he was only just beginning to appreciate. And, as if the writing was not sufficiently obscure, Amy must needs render it still more so by the burning tears which dropped fast and silently, but they were tears of joy.

"And now listen to me," said Mr. Ormington in a feeble voice. "Cecil Grey cannot be an Earl, but you and he shall share this fine estate, because he would have married you without anything. And the proud Countess walk on foot, while you dash by her in your splendid equipage. I shall be revenged yet—amply—gloriously revenged!"

"But poor Dunorven, grandfather?"

The old man hesitated.

"Nay, I am sure that you like him next to me. Let him have the estate—Cecil and I only ask for your love. And as to vengeance it is not ours to wield—but Heaven's."

"Beware, girl! It shall be as I have said!"

"Grandfather," continued Amy, clinging to him, "did I not promise that your frowns should never frighten me again? Believe me, that in spite of all your goodness—all your generosity, I could never be quite happy, knowing that Dunorven was ruined and disgraced. Dunorven who was so kind to you, to me, and all the world. Whose very courage and self-sacrificing spirit has rendered him unfit to struggle with its hardships."

"If I grant your request," said Mr. Ormington, "remember that it would condemn Cecil Grey to years of toil and application, for I am

not so rich as you suppose, and have not enough for both."

"He would not mind it. Let us write to ask him. Let us abide by his judgment, of which I am as sure as if the answer had already arrived."

"Pardon me if I prefer my own. Amy, thus far you have conquered me, but even your power has its limits. And now before this letter is dispatched, I must have your solemn promise that when I am dead and gone, and I feel as though it might not be long first, you will make no attempt to restore the forfeited estates, which I shall leave to you, to their former owner."

"Oh! grandfather, indeed I will not promise that!"

"Beware, Amy!"

"Now you are not angry with me, so it's no use knitting your brows, and pretending," said the girl, coaxingly.

"Promise, I say!"

"Never!" And she flung herself into his arms, and nestled closely to him. "And now what will you do to me, grandfather?"

"Put it out of your power to disobey me," said the old man averting his face, which did not look so very stern as one might have expected, "by sending for my solicitor to-morrow. And so tying up this estate, that even Cecil Grey, with all his legal knowledge, shall not be able to set it loose again. But I am weary now!"

"Yes, lay down and rest a little, while I send off my letter," said Amy soothingly, as she parted back his grey hair, and once again pressed her lips to his furrowed brow, and how calm he grew for that fond and innocent kiss. She said no more then, for somehow in her presumption, she dared to think that time only was needed for her yet to have her will in this as in everything else she chose. How soon we

become conscious of our own power ! And then creeping away, the girl left him to his repose, and withdrew to put in a brief and joyous postscript, which made the heart of her lover, when he received it, beat almost as hopefully as her own.

CHAPTER XI.

AMY had scarcely finished and dispatched her letter when the Countess entered her apartment, with an anxious and troubled countenance, half starting at sight of the bright smile which greeted her.

“Nay, all will go well yet,” said the girl soothingly, “at least I hope so.” Oh, when did Amy Fitzallan ever cease to hope? “My

grandfather is so kind now, and has even sent for Mr. Grey, in order that he may be a witness of our happiness," at this moment a passionate exclamation from the Countess reminded the thoughtless Amy of her auditor, and she paused abruptly.

"Go on," said her ladyship haughtily, "it only remains then for us to depart."

"Now heaven forbid! But you do not think as you speak. You do not really believe in your heart that I would rob Dunorven of his rightful heritage? he who has been so kind and good to me, almost like a brother, and whose interests are as dear and precious as my own."

"And yet," said her companion half ashamed of the emotion she had betrayed, "you have rejected with scorn a love which others envy you the possession of."

"Not with scorn—that were impossible," said Amy eagerly. "But the truth is, before

I ever met your son I was engaged to another, and that kept me safe. Had it been otherwise I had been less cold perhaps."

The mother's pride seemed somewhat satisfied by this frank avowal.

"And you think Mr. Ormington will relent?" said she.

"Oh, yes, I hope so."

"I believe you from my heart!" exclaimed the Countess extending her hand, "and ask forgiveness for all that is past."

"Nay, I have nothing to forgive, but ought rather to be grateful for the kindness and protection afforded me for so many years. For permission to take my proper station in your family instead of being banished, as I once feared, to the housekeeper's room. But it is best that you should not endeavour to see Mr. Ormington again just at present, as it might only serve to irritate him; and if he is better presently I will get him to send for Lord

Dunorven, whom I am quite sure he loves, and much may be effected between us in his present softened mood."

"But he knows nothing of this. I feared to pain his proud and sensitive spirit."

"And never need perhaps. It is best so, his manners will be more natural and unrestrained."

"But there is one thing which he must learn too soon."

"You mean my engagement to Cecil. Ah, poor Dunorven! but he will soon forget me, and be happy with our dear, good Clara St Aubyn after all."

It was cheering to hear Amy arrange every thing in her own hopeful way, as though it had already come to pass; and even the anxious mother caught the contagion of her joyous spirit, and felt comforted and relieved; and yet it was strange to see her thus seeking counsel and assistance from the very girl whom

a few short weeks before she had treated with scorn and neglect.

“ But I have not yet told you what I came on purpose to communicate. Mr. Trevallion has returned, and proposed for Anne.”

“ Oh! I am so glad, I was sure that he would.”

“ But then he does not even dream of the ruin hanging over our house.”

“ It would make no difference if he did. My dear grandfather is wrong about that.”

The Countess shook her head, she was older and wiser than our simple Amy.

“ And you gave your consent of course?”

“ Yes, with fear and trembling; and he seemed so proud—and Anne so happy! and enquired so kindly after you.”

“ Let us go down to them; but not with that sorrowful face lest they should suspect any thing; and no one must ever know this terrible secret but ourselves.”

"Heaven grant that it may be so," said the Countess; and as she entered the drawing-room leaning upon Amy's arm, the heart of Dunorven throbbed joyously, the more especially when he observed the good understanding which evidently subsisted between them, and the anxious watchfulness with which the young girl yet lingered by his mother's side, whispering to her every now and then words which fell like sunshine upon the darkness of her previous despair.

It was in vain that he tried, under a thousand pretences, to lure her away, to look at a rare plant on the lawn, or a new book, or print in the library. Amy playfully evaded every request, and bid him fetch the book and flower, if he was really so anxious that she should see them, for she was much too tired to move; and so putting up her little feet on the footstool, and leaning back her head on the silken pillows of the couch, looked so provokingly well and

happy all the time she was pleading fatigue and ill health, that he would have felt more than half inclined to be angry with her if it had not been for observing his mother's care and kindness towards his wilful tormentor.

"She was certainly meant for a lady," said Trevallion half amused with what he deemed her coquetry, and his friend's evident annoyance, "and is singularly graceful! I remember noticing this the first time we ever met. But Dunorven must take care she does not play the tyrant."

"What does it matter to Dunorven?" asked Lady Anne carelessly.

"Because I think he loves her."

"No, you are mistaken," replied the girl. "We all like Miss Fitzallan very much, but she will never be my brother's wife."

"Then he will never marry at all."

"Yes, bye and by. He is not so impatient as some people!" and those blue eyes looked fairly mischievous in their laughing beauty.

" Oh, Anne, if so he does not love. But tell me who I am to have for a sister-in-law?"

" You!"

" Why, if he is to be so slow about it, he will be my brother by that time."

" Guess?"

" I should not but for that look. You mean Miss St. Aubyn—but she is not handsome enough for Dunorven."

" And do men only marry for beauty?"

" Oh! yes, sometimes I suppose. That is of course."

Trevallion answered hesitatingly, for he spoke against his conscience. And the judgment of a man of the world like himself has often a deep truth in it; for it rarely happens thus. Grace and beauty, with the imaginative—gold and lands with the mercenary, are the present ruling stars of the matrimonial hemisphere.

"But you have not told me yet, Anne, whether you thought the time of my absence as long as I did? Whether you missed me very much?"

"No indeed, it passed much the same as usual." Provoking Lady Anne! And yet it will not do for us to minister too largely to men's vanity, which heaven knows is great enough already! To make them too conscious of their own power. But when just a little concession, a little peep into the hidden recesses of our hearts would make them very happy. Oh! surely there is no harm in it then? We should think not. And she thought not too, when she saw how disappointed and grieved he was by her answer; and so added in a voice too low to reach any ear but that of a lover, something which as it was meant for him alone, we do not think ourselves justified in repeating. Only that it had the effect of wonderfully improving and animating his really handsome

countenance. What could it have been? We are sure of one thing, that Lady Anne, when she looked at him, which was not just directly, did not in the least repent having uttered it.

Trevallion's congratulations to Amy, upon the recent discovery of her real rank and station, were both kindly and sincerely uttered, and feeling, them to be so, she answered in the same spirit

"I have often heard my father speak of Captain Fitzallan," said he "he was reckoned, I believe, one of the handsomest men of his day."

"I can easily fancy that from the portrait. But he must have died very young. I did not like to ask my grandfather all the particulars, just yet, as his name seems so displeasing to him. But I have only a very faint recollection of him coming occasionally to see dear mamma! who would try and smile while he staid, and

after he was gone used to sit and cry by the hour together."

"Yes, he fell in a duel with a brother officer, And I have heard my father say that few had much pity for the widow, but thought it rather a happy release for her."

"But if she loved him?"

"Is it possible for a woman to love one who is habitually unkind and neglectful of her?" questioned Trevallion doubtfully.

"Oh! surely yes!" replied Amy with eagerness, for she had her mother's heart. While the proud Lady Anne shook her head incredulously. But then it would not do for her to maintain such an opinion in the presence of the man to whom she was so shortly to be united, for fear he might one day put her theory to the test. While the other having no such dread before her eyes, dared to speak as she thought; as was indeed the truth, a truth borne out by the actual experience of daily life.

"My poor mamma!" continued Amy, sadly, "how much she must have suffered. But had I no relatives on my father's side, to whom she might have had recourse?"

"Most likely not, answered Trevallion, "as besides being almost the last of a noble, although somewhat decayed family, Captain Fitzallan, even before his marriage had contrived to alienate every friend he had."

"And was there no one to warn my poor mamma of all this—ere she had learnt to like him so well as not to believe a word against her idol. For I can easily imagine after that all the advice in the world would have been given in vain."

"It would seem not."

"And she had no mother too, while her father cared not for her. After all it was but natural. We must have something to love."

Dunorven gazed upon her with beaming eyes; but Trevallion looked at the Lady Anne.

And just then the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Alleyne, while Amy, forgetful of her former fatigue, and without fear of reproach now, bounded forward to meet him and prevent his entrance, for she wanted to talk to him all to herself. And the brow of the young Earl clouded as he watched them pacing up and down the terrace; the girl's frequent glances towards the chamber of her grandfather, marking the subject of their discourse. How much she seemed to have to tell, and yet to him who was once also in her confidence, not a word had as yet been vouchsafed, and the change troubled him. Turning away at length from the window, he met the anxious gaze of Clara St. Aubyn rivetted upon his countenance; but it was instantly averted, and she bent down again over her embroidery frame.

"I wish you were not going so soon, dear Clara!" said he sitting down beside her. For

sympathy is very sweet let it come from whom it will.

“ Yes, so do I,” answered the girl simply.

“ And must it be ?”

“ I suppose so. I wrote to my guardian this morning to ask him to come and fetch me.”

“ And what if I were to write to him to-night and contradict it ?”

“ Oh ! no, that would not do at all I am afraid.”

“ Well then it seems that we must consent to part with you, as the fashionable season is coming on. And the next thing we hear will be the news of your wedding, Clara.”

The girl did not answer ; while a tear fell like a dew drop upon the damask rose on the pattern before her ; and for a few moments Dunorven remained equally silent. What could he be thinking of ? She dared not even imagine. And then all at once that cheerful voice broke out again.

“ Why, my dear Clara, who in the world ever heard of a yellow forget-me-not? And you call yourself a botanist? Now you have all that to take out again. But I suppose you will say it is my fault for sitting here bothering you about what is sure to turn any girl’s head.”

“ Oh, no!” said Miss St. Aubyn eagerly.
“ I was not thinking of what you said.”

“ Well, don’t cut your fingers, or the canvass, child, there is no great harm done is there? Nay, you are not well, Clara, you sit poking over that frame of mamma’s until it makes your head ache. Fetch your bonnet, and we will go and look for some yellow forget-me-nots, shall we?”

The girl laughed and blushed; and Dunorven passed Amy on the lawn quite close, with her leaning on his arm; but so busy was she talking, as never even to notice them. If she had she would have been glad instead of sorry.

But presently she paused of her own accord, and proposed returning to the house, and seeing if her grandfather was yet awake. The Countess accompanied her, in her anxiety, to the very door; for well did she know that the future happiness of all, hung on the disinterested exertions of that young and noble-minded girl.

"Fear not," said Amy, encouragingly. "As good Mrs. Jelf used to say years ago, I was always famous for getting my own way. And somehow I always did in the end, by dint of tears and coaxing."

"But Mr. Ormington is not like Mrs. Jelf."

"No indeed, but nevertheless I do not despair, it has always appeared wicked to do that. God is so good to us that it seems almost a duty to trust in Him, as He has bid us do in times of trouble and affliction."

The proud Countess bowed down her head,

and retired with a humbler step, and more chastened spirit, but ere she had reached the end of the corridor, a wild cry proceeding from Mr. Ormington's apartment arrested her attention, and heedless of the consequences she rushed back and entered abruptly. He was still sitting where they had left him, in his easy chair, while Amy, pale and horror-stricken, knelt upon the ground at his feet, her white lips moving fast and convulsively, although no sound was heard after that one piercing scream of agony.

"He is dead!" exclaimed the Countess.
"May Heaven be more merciful to him than he was to me!"

"No, not dead, it was thus they found my poor mamma, and she lived and spoke after that! I have not lost him again so soon, and just when I was learning to love him so much for his kindness. My poor, poor grandfather!" And the girl bowed down her forehead upon his cold lifeless hand and wept.

Trevallion himself went instantly in search of the doctor, while Amy, assisted by Mrs. Jelf, chafed his clammy hands; crying and lamenting over him with a vain grief, which even Mr. Alleyne had not the heart to chide her for then.

"It was something so new," said she, "to have a real grandfather, and now I am alone again in the world!"

"And Cecil coming to-morrow," whispered the rector half reproving, half soothingly.

"Ah, dear Cecil! but if they could but have met."

"It is not for us," said her companion, "to question the decrees of Providence, but only to submit to them."

"Yes, I know, and yet it is hard nevertheless to lose him so soon. But he is moving. He is opening his eyes! I do think that he recognises me. Grandfather! dear, dear grandfather!"

A struggling smile passed over the old man's face, as though he would have answered in love to that wild appeal had it been permitted. And then his gaze wandered round upon the pale countenances which crowded about him with terrified looks, and saw the proud Countess, as she knelt sobbing by his side; nay, he even seemed to miss the presence of Dunorven, whom a messenger had been sent in search of through the grounds, and his look was troubled. Presently he began fumbling in his vest, with cold and trembling fingers, drawing from thence a worn and time-stained parchment, which Amy recognised at a glance as he held it towards her.

"May I do as I like with it?" she eagerly questioned. And again that sad smile for lack of words, spoke cheeringly of his changed feelings. His dull, glazed eyes followed her wistfully as she crossed the room and gave it into the hands of the Countess, and then closed

forever amidst whispered prayers and blessings.

After all he had a noble revenge, the noblest which it is in the power of man to achieve—forgiveness!

CHAPTER XII.

FROM the time of the old man's death, the Countess of Castle Coombe, became an altered woman. Not proud and repulsive in her stateliness, as she had once been, but kind and condescending, almost to playfulness. An alteration of mood which Mrs. Jelf first wondered at, and then copied as in duty bound, much to the enlivenment of the servants' hall, and her

own improved health and spirits. For it had cost no end of care and trouble to keep them all up to her strict standard of gravity and decorum, whereas the licence to laugh and talk as much as they liked, keeping of course within proper bounds, was easily granted and faithfully kept. But this act did not come into operation until after the funeral of Mr. Ormington.

Amy's grief although violent at the moment, was neither deep or lasting, and readily yielded to the soothing caresses of those who had so much cause to love and bless her, although they knew it not, all but that one who scarcely quitted her side for a moment. And the only comfort Dunorven had, was in witnessing the sympathy and affection which evidently existed between them, and more especially on his mother's part; for the girl would rather have been left alone to think in quiet, but was too grateful, and too fearful of wounding the feel-

ings of her companion, to give utterance to such a wish.

"I have been thinking," said the Countess, as they sat together, "that Mr. Grey may not perhaps be as willing as yourself to make so great a sacrifice for us. Must you tell him all?"

"Oh, yes, I will never have a secret from him—from my husband," and a bright blush spread over cheek and brow as she spoke, "nay even if I were to try and conceal it, I do think it would come out in my sleep. But you do not know him if you imagine this, or how just and honorable he is; after all it was but an act of common justice, we had in reality no right to this estate. I say *we*," added the girl, "because it seems to come so naturally now."

"And yet the money might have helped him to rise in his profession."

"Yes, so my poor grandfather said, but he

does not want it with his talents and industry."

"But what if he should be very angry?"

"Angry with me, let him if he can! but no, he will thank me for having acted as he would have wished, had he been near to advise."

The Countess was not quite so sanguine on the subject, but one thing she mentally determined that Amy's future portion should be the same as her own daughters', and she would tell Mr. Alleyne to let his grandson know of her intention, for some how she felt ashamed to inform Amy herself of what seemed so poor a recompense for her noble generosity; and yet the girl would have been very grateful if she had, although firm in her refusal to accept it, preferring still to owe everything to Cecil.

Amy's evident abstraction when they met on the following morning in that darkened and melancholy looking room, to partake of what was wont to be the most cheerful meal of the

day, could not escape the observation of the little group; and yet there could be nothing very wonderful in it considering her late bereavement. But somehow that would scarcely account for the restless manner, the cheek which flushed and paled again at the slightest sound, and eyes, bright and glittering as though they had never known tears or sorrow. And then once when she looked up so eagerly upon the opening of the door, and catching Mr. Alleyne's glance turned away again with a crimson blush, to make some trifling remark to Lady Charlotte, which she could neither answer or comprehend, it seemed very strange indeed.

Of course Trevallion and Lady Anne had no time to make observations upon others; and poor Clara as the period drew near for her departure grew sad and melancholy, and almost wished that she had gone at once when the Countess proposed it, it would have been much better.

"Do you not take any chocolate this morning, Dunorven?" asked Amy, whose duty it always was to preside at the breakfast table, and never perhaps had it been worse performed.

"Yes, if you would not put salt instead of sugar into it."

"Did I? how silly! what could I have been thinking of?"

"Would that I knew," thought the young Earl, and so he did all too soon, or rather too late for his own happiness. For just then the girl paused in the act of filling him a fresh cup, and starting up from her chair, was in another moment in the arms of her lover, and weeping passionately upon his bosom, forgetful of all the world beside.

"Nay, calm thee, my own Amy," whispered Cecil Grey, scarcely less moved, but with a clearer perception of the many wondering eyes that were fixed upon them; and affectionately

grasping the hand of the worthy rector, with a hurried bow to the rest, he drew her away into the sunny grounds; while soothed by his kindness the girl recovered her composure sufficiently to tell him, as briefly as possible, every thing that had taken place.

"And now," added she, "scold your poor, silly Amy as much as you like."

"Not so, but thank her rather for her sweet trust, and glory in her for what she has done; and fear not dearest, but what we shall yet be happy in that humble home to which your presence will bring a blessing more precious than all the wealth of worlds."

"And I have still my two hundred untouched, for my grandfather gave me money to send to Betty Harper; and my jewels, I had forgotten them, after all I shall not be quite a portionless bride," said the girl clinging to him.

"My own Amy, and so all their wealth has

not spoiled you? But I shall not trust you away from me again any longer than I can find a suitable house, and arrange a few little affairs requiring my presence, and shall return for that purpose to London immediately after the funeral."

"Oh, yes, stay with me until then; and will you come back and fetch me very soon?"

"Be sure of that, my little housekeeper, so rub up all your old skill under good Mrs. Jelf's directions, and prepare to put it in practice for my especial benefit."

"How much happier we are than if we had the estate," said Amy.

"Yes, because it would not have been fairly our own. But after all a fortune honestly come by, is not a thing to be scorned, my little heroine."

"Now you will make me wish again that I had one to give you."

"No, give me yourself, that is happiness enough."

Much longer they talked, for Cecil had not thanked her yet for all her frank and loving candour in writing to him as she had done, instead of suffering the seeds of bitterness and contention he had helped to sow, to ripen perhaps into ultimate estrangement. Or heard from her own lips how freely she forgave his past doubts; and Amy was the first to recollect that the good rector would be as anxious as herself to see and converse with his grandson after so long an absence. While some little explanation was also due to the party whom she had quitted so abruptly. The Countess adroitly availing herself of her absence to inform them of her long engagement to Cecil Grey, of whom she spoke in terms of high encomium, which completely won the heart of Mr. Alleyne.

Trevallion looked triumphantly at Lady Anne, but her glance was fixed upon the pale face of her brother, and her blue eyes heavy with tears.

“ Why dearest, you must not grieve thus,” whispered her lover. “ It was but an idle fancy, and Dunorven will soon get over it. Most men have one or two such before they love in earnest.”

“ Do you speak from experience ?” asked the girl quickly.

“ No, from observation.”

Lady Anne was glad of that, but she did not quite believe his former assertion nevertheless, it did not seem natural, and yet for all that was very true.

“ Well, I only hope you may be right.”

“ We shall see this day six months.”

“ And is that your term for a lover’s constancy ?”

“ There can be no love without return,” said Trevallion in his pride.

“ If she be not kind to me,
What care I how fair she be.”

“ Ah, there may be something in that, and

it is certain Miss Fitzallan never gave him the slightest encouragement."

"Depend upon it," said Trevallion, "that a broken heart is a rare thing indeed, now-a-days, except it be in the pages of a romance ; people have more pride or more sense."

"To be sure," said the Lady Anne, secure in her own happiness, "I cannot even fancy loving any one who did not love me too ; and yet," she added more gently, as her glance rested on the sorrowful countenance of Clara St. Aubyn, "such things may be." Aye, and are, proud and aristocratic lady, far oftener than the world ever dreams of.

The perfect security of the Countess of Castle Coombe, that her secret was safe at last, was somewhat disturbed by the arrival of Mr. Ormington's lawyer, with a will made by him only a few months since, and recently deposited in his hands ; and it appeared that he came in consequence of a note from the poor old man

himself, demanding his immediate presence; although afterwards re-assured by Amy's recapitulation of her grandfather's threat, the very day on which he died, and which it appears he fully intended to have put in execution, by the letter which he must have written immediately after she left him as she thought to repose; and from which it would appear that at that time no measure had yet been taken with regard to the final settlement of those much disputed estates, which his last act had been to render back to their former owner. But she was nevertheless anxious and uneasy until after the funeral, when, on the will being read, Amy was found to be left heiress of all his possessions, the extent of which report had not in the least exaggerated; and no mention made of the deed evidently retained in his own power, to do as he might think proper with.

Of course this discovery made a wonderful

alteration in the plans of the young lovers. And Cecil instead of returning to slave at his profession, as men must do in these days, who hope to rise at all above the common herd, and which he would have done cheerfully for her sake, was well content to look upon it in future, rather as a source of intellectual excitement, than pecuniary compensation, and settle quietly down in the possession of some thousands a year, with a grateful and well contented spirit. We do not specify the exact sum, for fear some might exclaim in astonishment, "why that was not so very much after all!" or others, less ambitious and aspiring, become lost in wonder as to how they would ever contrive to spend it. As if this last was not the very easiest thing in the world, even had it been double as much.

And so Amy, as she had often dreamed, became a great heiress, bestowing both herself and her possessions upon the chosen lover of her youth. But how seldom it is that our early

visions are thus realised. And yet for all that we will go on weaving them, there is time enough to wake up and become wiser, when we needs must. And it is certainly very pleasant.

“And very dangerous too!” exclaims a warning voice. Aye if we are silly enough to imagine impossibilities.

On the appointed day Clara St. Aubyn’s guardian arrived to fetch her away, evidently disappointed to find her looking so unlike all her former cheerful accounts of herself; but then the very presence of death might easily account for this. The farewell of the young Earl was brief and hurried, and he was evidently scarcely conscious of her departure; it certainly did not appear as if he would miss her very much. Amy alone whispered of hope to the half despairing girl; but her gentle tones seemed almost like a mockery, and flinging herself back in the carriage, as it passed out of the Castle gates, Clara covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly, little thinking how she should

one day return amidst smiles and rejoicings ; for we none of us know what Heaven may have in store for us, only that it is ever kinder than we can hope or deserve.

Dunorven likewise departed immediately after the funeral ; announcing his intention of spending the next few months at a fashionable watering place, the air of which had been especially recommended for his constitution. But it was the change and excitement only, which he sought. No opposition was of course offered to a plan which seemed to the Countess, evidently beneficial to his health and spirits, although all regretted his absence. and none more so than the innocent cause of it, as the only shadow upon her otherwise perfect happiness.

The young Earl, as he had once said, was spoiled with living so long among them all, and in his present restless state of mind looked forward with absolute dread to the idea of spending the next few months with no other society

than that afforded by such places; when on the third morning after his arrival, who should he meet on that crowded pier, but Clara St. Aubyn and her guardian, Mr. Graham, who had brought her there instead of taking her to London, as it had been his original intention, in order, as he said, to try if the sea air would not restore some of her wonted bloom.

The girl saw him directly, although she turned away her head, and answered with such apparent carelessness, to his frank, and almost joyous greeting. Oh! how often do we seem cold to others, when we are most glad, from the very fear of discovering it. But Dunorven was too happy to have met with her, to be thus repulsed; and after walking by her side with the utmost patience, looking every now and then into that half averted countenance, and thinking it the very prettiest he had seen since he quitted Castle Coombe: an original idea of his own, bye the bye, for many were passing

every moment, a thousand times more beautiful; and yet after all, Dunorven was right, one kind, familiar face was worth them all! he fairly invited himself *sans ceremonie*, to dine with them.

"Yes, pray come," said Mr. Graham, "for I fear Clara finds it but dull of an evening, with no one but me to talk to."

"No indeed," said the girl quickly.

"Well at any rate I do," exclaimed Dunorven. "But when did you arrive?"

"Better than a week ago, we came straight from the Castle here. It was an after thought, but I fancied Clara looked ill, and the sea breeze has done her a world of good already."

So it would seem to gaze upon that flushed cheek, and more especially as Dunorven did, until the crimson deepened every moment in intensity.

"Well then I may come this evening?" said

the young Earl, as they paused at the Hotel where Mr. Graham had taken apartments. "And you will sing me all my favourite songs, will you not Clara? And make it seem like home again."

"To be sure she will," said her guardian, answering for her, and Dunorven went back in better spirits than he had yet felt since he quitted Castle Coombe, while Clara St. Aubyn, who had only the day before observed to her officious attendant, that it was quite useless to take so much pains with her dress at a watering place, actually almost tired out the poor girl's patience with her alternations between blue, and a pale pink, and finally ended by choosing white, because she fancied Dunorven had once said all women looked best in white.

We do not know about all women, but certainly she looked very well in it, and so the young Earl seemed to think; although he suggested an addition to its simplicity, in the

shape of a little bouquet of flowers, which he purchased for that purpose, of a beggar girl, who was hovering around the balcony of the Hotel. While Clara herself confessed it to be an improvement. And after dinner, when she had sang to him, and poured out his coffee, and told him all the news and scandal of the place, for as if by mutual consent, neither reverted to that which they had quitted, he proposed their all going on the pier to hear the band play, and was not very angry with Mr. Graham, for backing out at the very last moment, and preferring the luxury of a solitary cigar instead ; or Clara either, although she did scold a little, and call her guardian idle and bearish ! at which he only laughed, and thought of his young days.

It was very delightful, that twilight walk, with the full military band, playing as it were, afar out in the ocean ; and the fairy-like pier, bounding beneath the feet which trod so gaily over it. And even when the music ceased at

length, and the crowd began slowly to disperse, well worth while to linger a little longer, if it was only to watch the shadows upon the water, or the stars coming out one by one, and looking down so peacefully over the earth. And how pleasant was the walk home all along the sea beach; the murmuring of whose waves always makes us feel sad, even in our wildest moods.

“And is it possible to enjoy all this at Margate, or Ramsgate, for instance?” Methinks we hear a curious voice exclaim, half incredulously.

Reader we have never been to either of those places, but it seems to us quite possible to be happy any where.

“And romantic too?”

Aye, even so, for the heart for the most part makes its own romance. And the poetry of heaven and earth is confined to no single spot, but spread abroad over the world like a mantle of light! The darkness and the shadow are of our own creating.

That night Dunorven changed his old lodgings for apartments in the same hotel with his friends ; and from thenceforth they were almost always together.

CHAPTER XIII.

AND now little remains to be told, only how Trevallion like most lovers, (and most men for the matter of that,) was impatient; and Lady Anne resolute in refusing to have the wedding take place until her brother could return to give her away. Which the Countess, much as she longed to once more see and embrace her son, thought somewhat selfish, as from the tone

of his letters she had began to hope he was getting over all those feelings of disappointment which the sight of Amy could not fail to renew. But who ever ventured to contradict a bride elect? The mandate was accordingly dispatched, and answered in person by the good natured Earl, who certainly looked as little as possible like a disappointed man. Lady Charlotte declared that he was actually getting stout and rosy, all which appearance might very naturally be ascribed to the sea air. There positively is nothing like sea air—and pleasant society.

Never surely was there a more beautiful, or queen-like bride!—a prouder and happier bridegroom—or two lovelier bridesmaids. And the wedding passed off as all weddings should, the jubilee of such an event being spread abroad among the poor and humble cottagers for miles round, whose grateful blessings are surely worth some trouble in winning, and must needs make it hallowed. Such satin, and blonde and

white feathers, and ribbons; and cakes, and confectionary. Alas! for poor Mrs. Jelf, on that day. The village of Castle Coombe was in a positive uproar, and the roads by which the young couple were to pass on their departure, thronged by an anxious and curious multitude; only rewarded for their pains by an occasional glimpse of a white, fluttering veil. For the Lady Anne was not one to sacrifice her aristocratic pride by enduring the vulgar gaze, nor did Trevallion seem to desire it. Desire it, what a term to use! But then they are married now; and we once heard a lady say, speaking no doubt from experience, that in expressing the wishes of a lover, one might say requests; but those of a husband were desires—another word for command we suppose. But after all, what does it signify? There is surely no hardship but much joy in obeying those we love.

“And was the Lady Anne always so quiet?” questions some of our male readers, half envy-

ing Trevallion in that case. We do not really know, but it is most probable. All women are who have every thing their own way, a very delightful state of affairs which but rarely happens in this weary world of ours. Certain it is that her husband was very proud of, and loved her dearly! Perhaps Amy might have been right in her sweet faith, and even had the worst come to the worst, it would have made no difference in his affection. But nevertheless, we are not quite sure, and it was as well for both that the trial was never made. Poor Miss Maxwell, with her pale, gentle face, in which sorrow had merged into a patient resignation to the will of Heaven, is an example to the contrary; but for the honor of human nature we will believe her to be an isolated one.

Immediately after the conclusion of the ceremony, the young Earl again quitted the Castle; perhaps he feared to be asked to remain and be present at the one which was to follow; or had

promised Miss St. Aubyn to be back in time for a regatta, which was to take place, and he so much wished to view. He who had witnessed the bridal of the sea, at Venice, and joined in many a festival upon its moonlit waters. Oh! it must have been something more than the regatta. Well, perhaps it was the remembrance of a sweet, tearful face raised to his, how silly to weep when he was only going away for so short a time! and a low voice whispering in his ear that it would afford her no pleasure, if he was not there too; for it is such things as these which breathe a charm over the humblest and most trivial amusements. And not all the poetry and sunlight of the sweet South, ever shed such a feeling of happiness on Dunorven's mind, as he experienced at that English regatta, in company with Clara St. Aubyn.

And yet gentle reader we would not have you think him changeable or inconstant; any more so, at least, than the generality of his sex.

But it is soothing to know one's self beloved ! —to have our eyes suddenly awakened to things and incidents, happening years ago, and no note taken of them at the time, that come back to our memories with a strange distinctness ; so that we learn at length to appreciate the heart which has been our own so long and devotedly, and never turned from its first faith even when ours was given to idols that have perished and passed away.

Thus it was with Dunorven, he was not vain, but the mist had fallen from before his eyes, and Clara's manner ever since he could remember, her passionate grief at Geneva, years ago, when she feared that he hated her—her sudden faintness, that day at the rectory, when his admiration for another was too plainly evident to admit of a doubt of its sincerity—her patience and gentleness and untiring affection, all combined to make him grateful, and the transition from gratitude to love, is almost imperceptible. And so they lingered on for

many long and happy months, the happiest in poor Clara St. Aubyn's life, while Mr. Graham, proved himself the kindest of guardians, by not only ceasing to urge her return, upon seeing how well the air agreed with her ; but always managing to want a nap or a cigar, just at the very time when Clara came to ask him if he would like to go out with them, and of course they were necessitated to proceed without him, wondering among themselves how it was possible to prefer sleeping or smoking on such a beautiful evening ; but the old man knew what he was about, and used to rub his hands and look after them with a quiet chuckle at his own sagacity ; or exclaim in the fulness of his honest heart, for he loved his fair ward like a daughter.

“ And so my little Clara, God bless her ! will be a Countess after all ! ”

Like a true man Dunorven was not content with the discovery he had made ; but must

needs have it confirmed by the lips of the girl herself; and lingeringly, with many a burning blush, was poor Clara led on to minister to his vanity and confess his power, although if the truth must be spoken, the young Earl was as free from the former as it is possible for one of his sex to be; and it seemed to him strange and unaccountable to be thus singled out as an object for the secret worship of a young and innocent heart.

“How was it, Clara?” questioned he, “that when you had so many admirers and I alone was cold and neglectful, you chose out me from among them all?” -

What girl could ever give a reason for an occurrence far too common? It might have been for that very cause, and yet Clara was not one to love from pique.

“And then I was lame too.”

“But was it not for me that you became so?”

"And could you even forgive my admiration of another?"

"Oh, yes, for was she not beautiful! far more beautiful than I, and who could help admiring her?"

"I am not so sure," said Dunorven, "about that. Miss Fitzallan was a splendid creature, but somewhat too gay and animated; she wanted repose. And after all, you know admiration is a very different thing from love."

"And yet you loved her once," and the girl's voice faltered slightly as she spoke.

"I fancied so, we men are very apt to do that, but the feeling I entertained for her was very different to that which I now feel for you."

The old tale, and yet Clara believed him, Oh, how trustingly! And she was right. It seems so natural to trust those we love, and so pleasant. To doubt or discredit a word they say is almost

like profanation. And how happy she was in her belief! With a bashful smile she shewed him the flower he had given her on the day they visited the Rectory, and asked, half archly if he too had preserved her glove with as much care; when he was obliged to confess to having lost, or if he had spoken the real truth burnt it. But a lock of her hair begged for upon his knees and placed carefully within his bosom, won him a ready pardon. There was no fear that he would lose that. And yet it is strange, how for weeks and months we meet and dwell with those who will one day be all in all to us, knowing them not until the veil is rent on a sudden from our eyes and heart.

How could he ever dream that she would become so dear to him, or Clara hope to realise what had seemed for years

“The desire of the Moth for the Star.”

Dunorven laughed at the idea of her comparing

him to a star, but was secretly pleased nevertheless, who would not have been? And yet after all there was nothing so very strange in it, for the heart makes its own idols; at which we gaze as through a gold tinted glass. So that whatever they may be to the world, in our eyes at least, there is a brightness and a glory about them which blinds and dazzles to every imperfection. Alas! for us, should this radiant mirror become suddenly broken, or dimmed, and we discern ruins only where we had built a shrine, lavishing upon it a whole wealth of vain love. Nothing remains for us in such cases but to wreathe amid its desolation the unfading flowers of a changeless affection, and should they fail to brighten and redeem it, we may well pray to die!

Reader, we hate describing weddings, they are all so much alike; but must nevertheless say a word or two about our heroine's, which had hitherto been delayed out of respect to her

grandfather's memory. And tell how good Mrs. Marsh, made all the cakes which were consumed on that day, and helped to eat them too, in a new silk gown of the bride's presenting, the first she had ever worn in her life. And no music was ever so sweet as its rustling sounded in her ears every time she moved, which was twice as often as there was any occasion for, and we verily believe on that account. Or how the stately housekeeper, actually led off the first dance; while the Countess looked on, laughing almost as merrily as Lady Charlotte, herself, who, not inaptly compared Mrs. Jelf's performance to that of a cow attempting a similar feat. And Martha, fluttered about in all the bravery of her white cap ribbons, laughing and crying by turns, and bidding every one good bye a dozen times over; for she was at Amy's particular request, to form a part of her new household, and see that dream of her simple heart, the great City of London!

Promising Thomas, the footman, who had long ago forgiven her for taking his cousin's place in the establishment, to write very frequently, and tell him all about it. "And perhaps, Miss Amy—"

"Mrs. Grey," suggested her companion.

"Well then, Mrs. Grey, but it does not seem natural like to call her by that name, will let me accompany them when they come down here again to visit my lady, at Castle Coombe."

In spite of all that Amy had said, for we may continue to designate her thus, she could not help crying a little during the ceremony, but then it was from pure joy and thankfulness, and no one thought to chide her for it. Few indeed could remain unmoved, so solemnly, and impressively did Mr. Alleyne read that most beautiful service; and the deep, contrite sobs of the once haughty Countess, were plainly to be distinguished, as she knelt humbly before the altar, calling down Heaven's choicest bless-

ing upon the head of her to whom she owed so much. And if wealth and love can ensure it, the last not least, although it requires a portion of the former, in this every day world of ours to maintain its continuance—no not its continuance for true affection is undying! but its happiness, however the romantic may dispute the fact, Amy was blessed.

The dream of her young life was realised—The pictures of her imagination not only embodied but gilded. True she could have done without the gilding, but nevertheless it made things brighter. To have toiled for and with him she loved, soothing his weariness, and smiling away all care, would have been a happy lot; but to have placed him above all toil, to have actually nothing to do as she had once dreamed, but sit all day long and look at him, was pleasanter still. Nor were the comforts of the good rector overlooked in the new home, which his affectionate children insisted

upon his henceforth blessing and sanctifying by his presence.

“ Well, who’d have thought it ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Hodgson, as the travelling carriage with the postillions in their smart satin waistcoats, and silver cockades, dashed past her door, and she caught a momentary glimpse of the bride’s beautiful, and joyous face, as she leant forward to smile her thanks for the magnificent bouquet, which Jem Marsh had thrown in with so good an aim, that it alighted at her feet. “ Who’d have thought it ! What would Mrs. Hopkins say, if she could see her now ? The idea of that rich Mr. Ormington, turning out to be her grandfather ; and yet I remember him well now, coming down all in a hurry and ordering a dinner which he never stopped to eat, although to be sure he paid for it like a prince ! I suppose he did not know her then. Well, the ways of Providence are very mysterious ! as the good rector said in his last sermon, the last too that

he will ever preach, for I understand that he is to reside in future with the young couple. I wish now that I had been a little more civil to the poor lady, her mother, but who was to guess how matters would turn out?"

The simplest way then, Mrs. Hodgson, even according to thine own selfish philosophy, is to be civil and kind to every one.

There seemed about this time to have been a spell set against the peace and quiet of the hitherto sober, little village of Castle Coombe; for no sooner had it settled down into something like its former state, than it was destined to be again disturbed by the return of the young heir, bringing with him his new bride; who was received by the dowager Countess, with affectionate joy, while Lady Charlotte eagerly welcomed her new but long loved sister.

Out of delicacy to Dunorven, little was said about Amy's wedding until he himself, began to

enquire into the particulars with a careless indifference, which effectually concealed any embarrassment which might have remained in speaking on the subject. And upon the conclusion of Lady Charlotte's description, he turned laughingly to his bride, to declare his infinite preference of their own snug and quiet way of managing matters.

"I could not have borne to be made such a show of!" said Dunorven, "and hear them perhaps pitying my little Clara, for marrying a lame husband."

"No, envying her rather," whispered the young Countess, bending affectionately over him, and pressing her lips to his broad and open brow, "envying her for having won the best and kindest heart that ever breathed."

"As if all looked on me with your loving eyes."

"And what matter if they do not, since it is me only for whom you have henceforth to care."

said his bride with a wilful smile. While Lady Charlotte whispered to her mother that she was positively growing quite handsome, But then she so happy, and the sunshine of the heart sheds a radiance over the homeliest features, lighting them into beauty.

"Take care Dunorven," said the Countess playfully, "or our gentle little Clara will turn out a very tyrant after all!"

"I am not afraid, dear mother! and who knows but what it may have been for the best, since but for that lameness she would have never thought so much about me."

"And who told you she ever did think much about you?"

"I myself," said Clara; "it was very silly of me, but it made him so happy!"

"And was I right in saying that it was this accident which first made you love me?"

"Not exactly, for I believe I could not have helped that any how," was the simple reply.

"and yet, perhaps, it gave power to the spell, since I could never forget that it was for me you suffered."

"Then I will never grumble at it again as long as I live."

"Not until next time!" suggested Lady Charlotte laughingly.

"Well, it may be so, and when that next time comes, Clara will forgive me again, and so on until she has made me as good and gentle and patient as herself."

"Nay, now you are talking foolishly," said the young wife, as she nestled closer to him, and rested her sweet face half tearful, half smiling, upon his shoulder. "It is I who should learn of you, not you of me."

The Countess drew her daughter away, and left them together, Lady Charlotte fully agreeing with her new sister, that if ever perfection existed in a man (which we beg leave to doubt) that man was Dunorven.

And now we break off somewhat abruptly ; but we are ourselves in a bright mood ; and all our dramatis personæ happy and well cared for, so that the addition of a chapter, or even a single page, in this April world of ours, might serve to break the spell. But let us not forget that as surely as the cloud must come for every one of us, so will the sunshine ever follow to chase away its gloom !

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